

THE INDEPENDENT

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I'll use the Euro veto, says Blair

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Tony Blair yesterday played the Euro-sceptic card to deny allegations that Labour would be a "soft touch" over Europe, as John Major returned from the Dublin summit to face a "cliffhanger" vote in the Commons tonight on fishing policy.

The Labour leader sought to maximise the threat of a government defeat tonight with an assurance that he would be prepared to use the veto and allow Britain to be isolated to protect the country's interests.

"If it is in Britain's interests to be isolated through the use of the national veto, then we will be isolated. If it is in Britain's interests to be in a minority of one, we will be in a minority of one," he said.

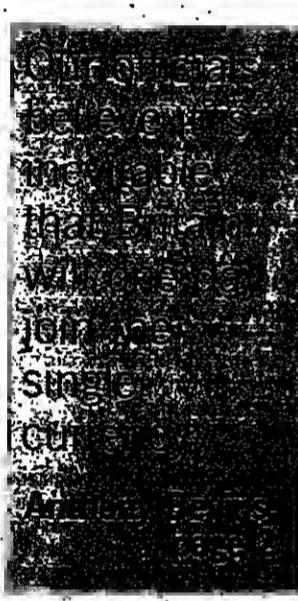
A Labour government would use the veto on defence, taxation, immigration and border controls. But setting aside the central themes for the election, Mr Blair said that Mr Major was weak in Europe because his government is divided.

He answered the Tory charge that European leaders were waiting for a Blair-led Labour government by arguing that he would be able to bargain from strength. "If we're to stay in Europe, the test should be: success or failure."

"And the truth is, because of the problems in the Conservative Party, we are probably in the weakest position. Britain has been in - weak in terms of gaining the things we actually want since we entered the Common Market," he said on BBC Radio 4 yesterday.

A Labour leadership source said: "We are trying to do on the Europe issue what we have achieved on taxation. Europe was the last weapon in the Tory locker, and we want to neutralise it."

Although an announcement is expected today on the selective cull of 100,000 cattle at a cost of £200m, Mr Major will return to face demoralised Euro-sceptics when he reports to the Commons after the Dublin summit. Conservative Euro-sceptics said that there was a "depressed mood" and some were still considering



whether to vote against the Government in tonight's vote on fishing.

Douglas Hogg, the Minister of Agriculture, will fly to Brussels for the agriculture meeting after the vote to try to get a start on the lifting of the export ban on beef, beginning in Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister is expected to deflect Euro-sceptic criticism from his own back bench by accusing Mr Blair of weakness on Europe. Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, yesterday accused Mr Blair of following the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, towards a European "superstate".

The Foreign Secretary reaffirmed the Government's readiness to refuse to sign a new treaty at the next summit in Amsterdam after the election, unless it won its demands to end "quota hopping" on fishing in British waters by Spanish trawlers, and to block the introduction of the 48-hour working-time directive in Britain.

But Conservative Euro-sceptics showed no let up in their criticism, which now seems set to continue until the election. David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists, the Tory champion on the right wing, accused Mr Major of surrendering the British veto over the legalisation of the euro and the introduction of the stabil-

ity pact to enforce monetary discipline on countries entering the single European currency.

The Euro-sceptics will question Mr Major over reports that Germany and France will exclude Britain from a stability pact for those inside the single currency if Britain remains outside it...

Risking inflaming the Euro-sceptics, Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, defended the new euro banknotes approved at Dublin last week. "They're the modern type of European banknote with these psychedelic colours - which I think are there for security reasons - and they're all right," Mr Clarke told the *Money Programme* on BBC2 last night.

"They had to be deliberately a bit Euro and non-national. I think the excitement of the British press is frankly ridiculous. It's just the Euro-sceptic press decided to get excited about them all over again," the Chancellor said.

The Prime Minister had hoped to return to London claiming a victory, after Tory backbenchers a fortnight ago against the Chancellor, but Labour strategists said that the Irish government, which held the revolving presidency of the European Union, had removed any points where Mr Major could make his stand at Dublin. "We can't see any cheer-lines for his statement today," one leadership source said.

The Government has imposed a three-line whip on all its MPs, including those who are sick, to avoid a damaging defeat on the fishing policy tonight. Euro-sceptic Tory MPs will be meeting before the vote to decide on tactics. Donald Dewar, the Labour chief whip, said it would be a "cliffhanger".

A defeat would not bring down the Government but, after Labour's victory at the Barnsley East by-election, Mr Major is in effect in charge of a minority government. A defeat could therefore hasten an early general election. David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists, the Tory champion on the right wing, accused Mr Major of surrendering the British veto over the legalisation of the euro and the introduction of the stabil-



Out and down: England's stock in world cricket hit a new low yesterday in Barbados - which means 'place of the slayings' - with a two-wicket defeat against Zimbabwe. Mervyn Atherton's team began this winter's tour of Zimbabwe and New Zealand with only those two countries ranked below them. England have lost three of their four one-day internationals against Zimbabwe; yesterday's victory is only Zimbabwe's eighth in 63 one-day matches. Sport Section, inside

Zimbabwe with only those two countries ranked below them. England have lost three of their four one-day internationals against Zimbabwe; yesterday's victory is only Zimbabwe's eighth in 63 one-day matches. Sport Section, inside

QUICKLY

Indonesian forces 'connived in murder' Armed men, protected by police, stabbed and killed Indonesian pro-democracy demonstrators during a raid on their headquarters in Jakarta in July, according to eyewitnesses interviewed by *The Independent*. Their statements represent the first direct evidence of what has been rumoured for months: that the Indonesian security forces, notorious for brutality in East Timor, connived in the murder of unarmed protesters in the country's capital. Page 10

Bishop sparks gay wedding row by backing homosexual 'unions'

Andrew Brown
Religious Affairs Correspondent

The Bishop of Bath and Wells, the Right Rev Jim Thompson, has re-ignited the Anglican civil war over homosexuality by suggesting that the state should recognise and the Church should bless stable homosexual unions.

The bishop is careful not to say that these unions would be marriages or that the clergy should enter into them. But he writes in his recently published book *Why God?*: "I am in favour of strengthening the social support for gay people to have sustained, faithful and loving relationships by legal agreement and by the prayerful support of the church."

Bishop Thompson, who is seen as being on the liberal wing of the Church of England, said yesterday: "One of the things that helps people towards fidelity in life is proper recognition by society. I don't believe that recognition can be mar-



riage; but there ought to be a recognition of jointly held property in order that people will have things that bind them together."

His proposals come in a book he has written to persuade intelligent agnostics in their twenties, like his own two children, that the Christian faith is worth taking seriously.

He argues that cohabitation or informal commitment lacks the long-term dimensions of marriage, but that Christians cannot condemn it out of hand. "Although there are many who would like ethics to stand still where the Bible stands in every particular, this is neither possible nor desirable."

Lambeth Palace would not comment on Bishop Thompson's suggestions. The Vatican has repeatedly condemned all attempts to recognise homosexual relationships. Last Thursday, Pope John Paul II said that gay marriages threaten the family at its very foundations and threatens the future".

I suppose they might be called upon to perform these ceremonies."

The movement, which celebrated its 20th anniversary with a controversial service in Southwark Cathedral last month, maintains a register of clergy prepared to perform services of blessing for homosexual unions, though, like the bishop, it is careful not to call them marriages.

Dr David Holloway, of Reform, the evangelical group which protested loudest against last month's service in Southwark Cathedral, said: "Bishop Thompson is a walking disaster in every respect both for the culture and for the church. Looking at it as a citizen, I think it is very important that we resist here."

"What we need in society is a strengthening of the norms of the marriage, which has to come about through cultural pressure."

"Marriage as it has developed is not biologically natural - in

keep a father in a committed relationship you need a whole lot of other constraints," Dr Holloway said. "The gay issue is the motor for the whole programme of destabilising the sexual culture, and the effects of that on children are disastrous."

Even moderate traditionalists like the Archdeacon of York, the Ven George Austin, were shocked by the bishop's proposal.

The traditional position of the Church has been that these people should keep it in their trousers. The Bishop of Bath and Wells appears to believe they should keep it in each other's," the Archdeacon said yesterday.

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Crash fear grounds all 747 Jumbos

Michael Streeter

Expensive modifications of Boeing 747 airliners, including around 100 based in Britain, are likely to be ordered this week following fears that the disaster of Flight TWA 800 was caused by an explosion in a fuel tank.

The Civil Aviation Authority expects to hear from its United States counterpart the Federal Aviation Authority "early this week" about whether the changes are needed.

A spokesman for the CAA conceded it was "more likely than not" that the FAA would adopt the recommendations of the US's National Transportation Safety Board - published on Friday - as a directive.

In turn, it is almost certain that the British organisation will immediately pass on the effect of the directive to carriers based here, such as British Airways and Virgin Atlantic.

The cost of any design changes, which could run to millions of pounds worldwide, will probably be born by Boeing, which might also have to pay for the disruption caused by grounding the aircraft. The work would be phased in over a set period, perhaps a year.

According to the CAA, which insisted that jumbo jets were safe, the directive is expected to highlight two potential areas of concern, one design-based, the other procedural.

One would require extra insulation between the central fuel tank and the nearby air-conditioner unit to stop fuel vapours over-heating.

The other would be a requirement that the tank always be kept with some fuel reserves to prevent a build-up of vapour.

Both changes address the theory of the NTSB - that an explosion from within a fuel tank was a likely cause of the TWA disaster, which

killed 230 people in July. On Friday the board, which found no sign of a bomb or missile, wrote to the FAA outlining a list of urgent modifications of the tanks. Experts may now reconsider past unsolved air accidents in the light of the theory.

Yesterday MPs called for urgent action over the recommendations.

Gwyneth Dunwoody, Labour member for Crewe and Nantwich, said: "The volatility of aviation fuel in empty tanks has been a worry to the aviation industry for some time.

"Responsible airlines will certainly act but the Department of Transport has a responsibility to check on behalf of British passengers."

However, there was a growing fear among some experts that the recommendations may reflect a political desire to be seen to be doing something.

David Learmount of *Flight International* said: "The NTSB does not know what the cause is... I believe their thinking is that because they do not know the cause, they cannot use this as an excuse for doing nothing."

Yesterday British Airways, which has around 60 747s, said it had been carrying out its own checks since September and had found no problems. The airline said it would implement any CAA directive immediately, as did Virgin Atlantic.

Boeing merger

Boeing and McDonnell Douglas said yesterday that they planned to merge to create the world's largest aerospace company with sales of \$48bn, 200,000 employees and an order book of civil and military aircraft worth \$100bn. The new group will manufacture about three-quarters of the world's commercial airliners.

Business, page 16

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2 news

Fraud feared in £250m loan plan

Judith Judd
Education Editor

Police are investigating allegations of fraud in a £250m government scheme which aims to help adults retrain for jobs.

Officials at the Department for Education and Employment asked for the inquiry into bogus applications for career development loans.

Police believe that some claimants have made multiple applications and some have received money for courses which do not exist. Some of the fraudulent claims appear to

have been highly-organised. Ministers agreed to guarantee the repayment of the loans, which are made by the banks, and the department has so far spent £28m covering unpaid debts run up by applicants.

How much of this is due to fraud is not yet clear. Stephen Byers, Labour's employment spokesman and MP for Walsall, said: "At a time of scarce resources, it is vital that every pound of public money is used for its proper purpose.

The Government should not have sat idly by and allowed this to happen. Improving people's

skills and equipping them for the future through career development loans is vitally important."

In parliamentary questions tabled on Friday, he asked for new safeguards to stop fraudulent claims being made. He also asked for an estimate of the fraud losses so far.

The loans, of up to £8,000, are available for the unemployed or for those who want to train for a new career.

Police are concerned that the high street banks involved did not always investigate the existence of courses or check on

the backgrounds of applicants.

Forces throughout the country have been warned that the scheme may be open to fraud.

A spokesman for the Department for Education and Employment said: "You can't say that £28m has been paid out because of fraud. There is no direct link between default and fraud."

"Some people have difficulty in repaying loans because they are on a low income."

"Only eight cases are being investigated. That is a tiny proportion of the total loans since the scheme started in 1988."

A range of measures was in place, he said, to check the validity of applications. To get a loan, an applicant had to produce a certificate from a training provider. "The department guarantees a proportion of career development loans made by the banks to encourage them to make loans," he said.

"This in no way relieves the obligation on the person to whom the loan is made to repay it to the bank. It is for the bank to assess whether to make the loan."

Around £250m has been paid out since the scheme started.

Scotland Yard said police had been asked by the department to investigate earlier this year. Subsequent investigations revealed a series of allegations of deception and investigations are ongoing.

Barclays, one of the four banks involved, said it was working with the department to prevent fraud. "Barclays is a responsible lender and, as with any loan, if it appraises all individuals' financial circumstances when receiving an application."

Training establishments were checked against the department's central database, it said.

significant shorts

Hurd warning over Bill to ban handguns

Former Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd fuelled a rebellion by backwoods peers in the Lords over the Bill to ban most handguns

with a warning to the Government to "pause and think" rushing into legislation on tragedies like Dunblane.

Sir Ivan Lawrence, chairman of the home affairs select committee promised to raise the question of convicted persons giving interviews with the Press Complaints Commission after Learie Chindamo, 16, told the Sunday Times in a telephone interview from his young offender's institute that he prayed for Mr Lawrence and his family every night.

Sir Ivan said: "It is not right that a murderous thug can give interviews like this and if they do it should be a disciplinary matter.

"I shall also be seeing why we allow these interviews to take place. Dealing with criminals is in the Code of Conduct accepted by newspapers."

Former whip facing probe

The Commons committee whose damning report last week prompted Paymaster General David Willets to resign is to meet today to consider its next moves.

The Standards and Privileges Committee will meet in private at the Commons. Its agenda could well include whether to call a second Tory - social security minister Andrew Mitchell - to give evidence about an alleged committee-nobbling attempt.

As in the Willets affair, the Mitchell case concerns a note written by a whip two years ago about the now-defunct Members' Interests Committee's investigation of cash-for-questions claims against Tory former trade minister Neil Hamilton.

Mr Mitchell, then a whip, was despite Labour protest, a member of that Members' Interests Committee.

Readers win lottery jackpot

Up to 350 Daily Mirror readers have become the first to scoop the National Lottery jackpot with a syndicate ticket issued free as part of a newspaper promotion. They will share £1.3m in Britain's biggest newspaper cash-out.

The Mirror syndicate ticket was one of seven to share the £9.1m first prize in Saturday's Lottery draw. The newspaper buys 30,000 tickets each week and issues syndicate cards free with the paper every Saturday. It is not yet known exactly how many readers will share the cash. The winning numbers were: 24, 12, 33, 34, 42, and 47, with bonus 44.

Food poison toll mounts

Two more suspected cases of colistin poisoning were recorded in central Scotland yesterday, taking the total number of people with symptoms to 399. Of those, 218 have been confirmed. Twelve people have died. Health board officials said 21 adults and a child remained in hospital, with nine giving cause for concern.

Research published today by the homeless charity Shelter estimates that each inappropriate visit to an A&E department costs the NHS three times the cost of a visit to a GP. Nearly six out of ten visits by the homeless were inappropriate, compared with 20 and 25 per cent for the general population.

The homeless often find it more difficult to be registered with a family doctor and the charity is calling for the system to be reformed so that homeless people are not excluded. Glenda Cooper

Hospital visits wasting money

Thousands of pounds of NHS money is being wasted each year treating homeless people in accident and emergency departments who it would be cheaper and more effective to send them to GPs.

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Convoy: Police escorting boats through west London yesterday for the International Boat Show at the Earls Court Exhibition Centre on 3-12 January. Photograph: Jon Lawrence

How the euro will straitjacket Britain

Member states will be strapped into a strict economic discipline whether they join the single currency or not. Anthony Bevins reports

The hard terms set for the single currency at the weekend Dublin summit makes eventual British membership inevitable, according to Treasury sources.

An agreement reached between economic and finance ministers on Friday, and endorsed by heads of government in Saturday's summit conclusions, straps all member states into a strict economic discipline, whether they join the euro or not.

The report, from the economic and finance ministers (Ecmfin), including British Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke, says all member states have mutual interests and obligations in the monetary field. Indeed, the Maastricht Treaty says that each member state shall treat its exchange rate policy as a matter of common interest.

The European Monetary Institute put legal and treaty requirements even more firmly demanding "close policy co-ordination" between the Euro-zone countries, and non-members, as "an integral part of the completion of the economic and

monetary union process". It said Article 109m of the Treaty made it an "obligation" to treat exchange rate policy as a matter of common interest "in order to ensure the efficient functioning and development of the single market".

The assumption running throughout the text of the Ecmfin report is that all members of the European Union are to be locked into what one Irish minister called "a disciplinary straitjacket".

One British source said once London had met the terms for single currency membership, the so-called economic convergence criteria - as John Major said it would - there would be little point in staying out.

Remaining out would mean accepting all the pain of economic and monetary union, without getting any of the gains.

Mr Clarke told the Commons last week that there would be clear advantages from being a euro member, provided mem-

bership was restricted to countries genuinely strong enough to survive the rigours of euro discipline. He said that a single currency would not only reduce foreign exchange costs, making it easier for small business to compete in the single market, but would also force interest rates down.

Mr Major has given firm assurances that there is no question of steriling going back into the existing ERM from which it crashed in 1992, to the great embarrassment of the Prime Minister, and a large-scale devaluation of the pound.

Last week's Dublin meeting, however, appeared to assume that even Euro states would join the ERM 2.

"While membership of ERM 2 remains voluntary," the Ecmfin report said, "member states with a derogation can be expected to join the mechanism

and thus to have a central [exchange] rate vis à vis the euro, thereby providing a reference point which assists in judging the adequacy of their policies."

The third group of countries would be those that neither joined the euro, nor ERM 2.

Nevertheless, they do not escape the straitjacket. The Ecmfin report said: "Member states outside ERM 2 and thus not having a central exchange rate will present policies so as to enable appropriate surveillance in the council, which can make, when necessary, non-binding recommendations."

This surveillance will seek to ensure that their policies are oriented to stability and thus to avoid real exchange rate misalignments and excessive nominal exchange-rate fluctuations.

The other disadvantage of staying out of the euro on a long-term basis will only emerge over time, but the Treasury is already expressing concern that EU ministers will set up their own unofficial caucus meetings to lay down the direction of overall economic and financial policy for the entire union to their own advantage.

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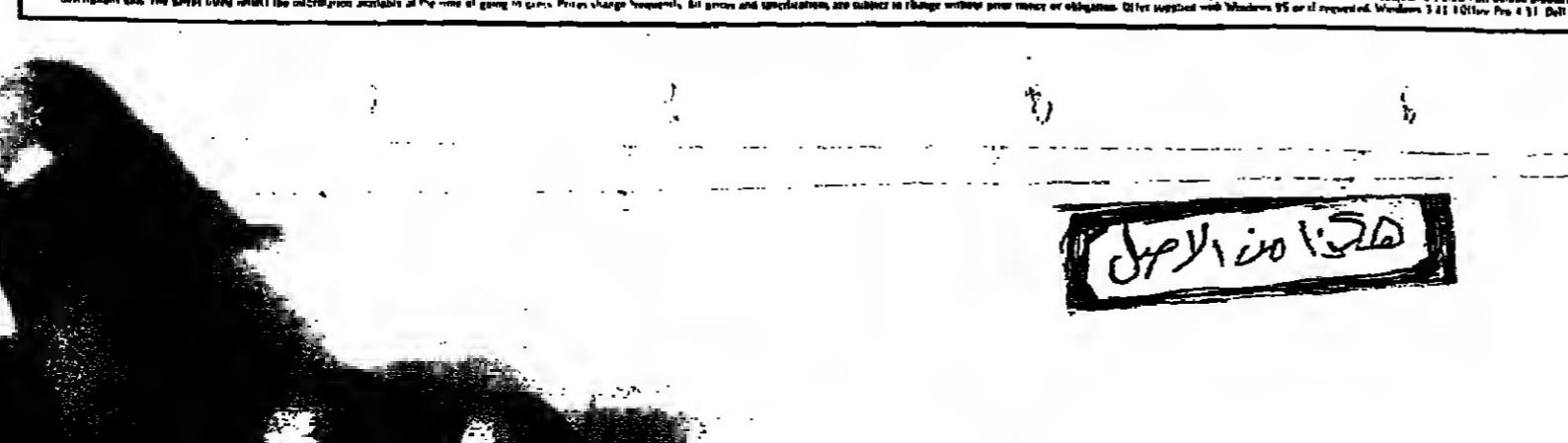
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Shopaholic suffering: Christmas brings crisis for the women addicted to buying happiness

Liz Hunt
Health Editor

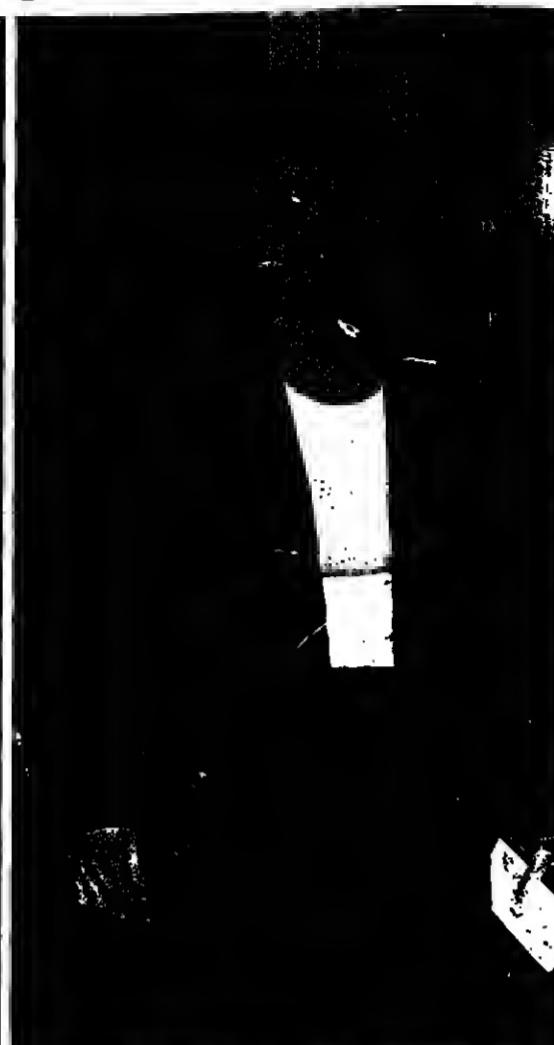
The Duchess of York was one; Imelda Marcos was another while Paula Hamilton, the model and former Volkswagen girl, transformed herself into one and says it saved her life. They are shopaholics, women addicted to the act of shopping who find in conspicuous consumption the satisfaction denied to them in their personal and professional lives.

During the Christmas period, such women – and the vast majority of an estimated 700,000 shopping addicts in Britain are female – are at their most vulnerable. They are caught up in the shopping frenzy which affects us all – but more so. "Christmas and the New Year sales for them is like a red rag to a bull," according to Dr Richard Elliott, an expert on the condition and co-author of a new report. "The self-imposed restraints they use to control their habit are threatened more than at any other time," he says.

The report sheds light on a condition which is widely-recognised – its medical name is onomania – but treated as something of a joke. It can be as destructive to individuals and their families as drugs or drink. Most of the purchases are clothes which are often never worn. The average debts of shopping addicts are between £12,000 and £15,000. One woman owed £70,000 after remortgaging her house to fund her habit. The husband of another sued for divorce after she bought 160 pairs of shoes on his credit card.

The first in-depth study of British shopaholics, funded by the Economic & Social Research Council and is published in full today, says some women attempt to shop their way out of despair and dissatisfaction – albeit temporarily – as an alternative to drinking.

Dr Elliott and Professor Kevin Gournay say that the use of alcohol by men as a mood modifier is "socially acceptable behaviour until it becomes very extreme". However the same is



Top of the shops: Confirmed addicts (from left) Paula Hamilton, Imelda Marcos and the Duchess of York, who have transformed the mundane act of shopping into an art form

not true for women. "For women, shopping may provide a socially acceptable alternative to alcohol for mood repair," they write.

Paula Hamilton would agree. She swapped one addiction for another. "I've gone from an alcoholic to a shopaholic," she admitted earlier this year.

In detailed interviews with more than 50 shopping addicts surveyed from 19 to 74, the researchers found that almost two-thirds shopped to excess because they were depressed – and the cause was usually an unsatisfactory relationship. One in 10 addicts said they shopped to spite their partners because they felt patronised and undermined in their relationship.

Fergie's shopping sprees as she struggled through relationships with two rogue Texas males and an absent Prince, appears to back this finding. In one afternoon she is reported to have blown £50,000 on 12 designer dresses, and £3,000 in an hour on 20 pairs of boots and shoes at a New York boutique. At their peak, her debts were estimated at £3.5m.

"The existential addicts are creating a sense of meaning in their lives through their consumer choices..." the report says. "This is not mere pursuit of pleasure, however, but is part of a conscious process of

self-development where the individual is seeking to create and maintain an identity which is founded on skilful shopping behaviour."

It is claimed that Imelda Marcos, whose global shopping sprees and hoarded purchases were revealed after the downfall of her husband Ferdinand, President of the Philippines in 1986, shopped aggressively to eradicate her humble origins and the rejection she suffered by wealthy relatives when she was a child. It is said that her home was a garage shared with

the family car. Shopping to excess reaffirmed her status as First Lady.

In an accompanying postal survey by Dr Elliott and Professor Gournay, less than half of 101 shopping addicts said they were happy with their relationship, compared with a 75 per cent satisfaction rating of 28 "normal" consumers. About 40 per cent of addicts had little or no interest in sex and 45 per cent said their sexual relations were unhappy. Comparable figures for normal consumers were 14 per cent and 20 per cent.

Dr Elliott said that the 50 shopping addicts in the main survey came from a range of backgrounds and income, and 45 had an income of their own from a salary, an allowance or savings.

Five were on income support or another benefit. Seven of them said they had been physically, sexually or emotionally abused as children. Nine had suffered a bereavement in the five years preceding the study; 24 were divorced or widowed; 13 had or were currently being treated for depression and four

were taking the "feelgood" drug Prozac.

The one common feature among the group was that they all recognised they were shopping addicts, according to Dr Elliott. "They all to a greater or lesser degree showed the same pattern of anticipation and excitement prior to and during the shopping experience, feelings of guilt and remorse afterwards and a desire to keep their behaviour and goods secret from others." More than 20 of the group said they had experienced worrying levels of debt.

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'Every wardrobe in the land contains a lesson in humility'

Serena Mackesey casts a shop-worn eye over a seasonal obsession

overspill of Hades. The underworld ran out of room some time around the Second World War; now they house us in Nissen huts.

Research into compulsive shopping has found that its victims – generally women – do it mainly to restore a sense of power, or to assert individuality. Which just goes to show what an unreasoned thing addiction is. I assert my power by believing advertisements. I assert my individuality by spending

£49.99 on a beaded top available in sizes 10, 12 and 14 in every branch of Next from Taunton to Inverness.

Still, shopping is good for bringing the ego down to earth. There's no curative for conceit like the sight of your halogen-lit self hauling a pair of undersize trousers up your thighs.

Retailers are proficient at pressing our inadequacy buttons: inadequacy about income (other people can afford £13.99

for a pair of socks), about our bodies (somehow somewhere, must look great in lemon), about our adventurousness (go oo – of course you can wear a caftan). There is no wardrobe in the land that doesn't contain at least one lesson in humility.

The more I shop, the more I realise that I don't do it to feel good, I do it to glean achievement to less venal pursuits. Those sporadic moments of triumph are massively outweighed by read-like teenagers pointedly smiling: "Sorry, that's the largest we do." Just one day in retail arcadia, and I'm ready for the therapist's chair – even Mr Hong's.

So, beyond the human suffering, the agony and frustration, we must recognise that the longer the present situation continues, the more difficult it will be to solve it.

We welcome the signals sent by the British Government that you are determined to be effectively and deeply engaged in the efforts to solve the problem. In this respect it is important to bear in mind the following:

- Tolerance has never solved any problem. In the case of Cyprus tolerance has facilitated the Turkish occupation. Britain as a guarantee of the peace has the obligation to guarantee the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Cyprus which are being grossly violated by the continuing Turkish occupation.
- The presence of the Turkish troops on the island and the continued ethnic cleansing, carried out by Turkey, are a gross violation of the principles of international law, the several resolutions of the United Nations, the principles of the Council of Europe – of which Turkey is a member – and the code of conduct of the OSCE of which Turkey is also a member.
- Denktash's dream is to become 'President' of a recognised state. He hopes that by blocking all efforts for a solution to the Cyprus problem, his illegal entity will eventually be recognised. In this respect he interprets any visits or meetings with him or the members of his illegal regime by foreign officials, in the occupied area or abroad, not as an encouragement for a solution, but as a step towards recognition of his illegal regime.
- Cyprus will soon be commencing accession negotiations with the European Union. The period from now until these negotiations commence is ideal for making every effort to reach a solution. Thus, every opportunity available should be explored with urgency. At the same time any signals which highlight and magnify difficulties of accession of Cyprus if the problem is not solved, are not only unnecessary but are damaging the prospect for the accession process serving as catalyst for the solution of the problem.

Dear Foreign Secretary,

Your mission will be successful if you send a clear message to Mr Denktash, that Britain will never recognise his illegal regime and that the British Government is determined to do its utmost for an urgent solution to the Cyprus problem.

This is the moment for resolute action and not declarations.

We wish you every success in your mission and we will support fully any determined effort to bring an end to the Cyprus problem.

Yours faithfully

George Christofides
On behalf of the National Federation of Cypriots in Great Britain

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Motorists are driven to despair by poor signs

Nigel Cope

Britain's road signs are a national disgrace which costs the economy millions of pounds a year, says a leading motoring organisation.

The British Road Federation, which represents 13 million motorists, says two-thirds of road signs within the M25 are illegible, inaccurate or inconsistent. Through London is the worst region, the federation says the problem extends to many other parts of the country. The A556 in Cheshire, the M61/M63 in the north-west, the A38 in Birmingham and the Leeds inner-city ring-road are also picked out for criticism.

The federation's criticisms are included in a report called "Signing: the case for investment". It says good signing contributes towards reduced speeds, reduced congestion and fewer accidents.

Mark Glover, the report's author, says the cost of poor signing is estimated at £35m a year in London alone. The costs include lorries getting lost, businesspeople arriving late for meetings and a higher rate of accidents.

The report has won the backing of the RAC.

Kevin Delaney, the RAC's traffic and road safety manager, said: "The lack of investment in signing is not only short-sighted. It is a national disgrace.



Run-around: Signs in Great Eastern Street, east London

Good signing is a highly cost-effective means of improving road safety and reducing congestion and pollution."

The report criticises the Government's decision to postpone the London Resigning Project, which was due to start earlier this year at a cost of £17.6m. It was postponed due to lack of funds.

The federation says the programme should be reinstated in

the next financial year. It calls for the Government to release funds to local authorities to implement minor works and local safety schemes. It also advises the Government to take advantage of more modern materials which improve the "reflectability" of road signs, making them easier to see, especially at night.

Mr Glover says that almost every sign at the roundabout, in south London, is of poor quality. Some are out of date, illegible or in permanent darkness. Others are rendered useless by peeling paint or are covered in graffiti.

Mark Glover, "The signs at the Elephant and Castle, for example, one of London's busiest junctions, are in a terrible state."

Mr Glover says that almost every sign at the roundabout, in south London, is of poor quality. Some are out of date, illegible or in permanent darkness. Others are rendered useless by peeling paint or are covered in graffiti.

news

Blair speech today will set out his plans for making education Labour's leading priority

'Super heads' to rescue schools

Judith Judd
Education Editor

A new breed of super head-teacher, paid over the odds and running more than one school, would be created by a Labour government.

Under plans to be announced in a speech today by Tony Blair, the Labour leader, successful heads would be paid to take over nearby failing schools. They might run another secondary school as well as their own, or one or more feeder primary schools.

Heads were last night sceptical about the plan. John Sutton, general secretary of the Secondary Heads Association, said: "Having run a multi-site school, it isn't something I would wish on my worst enemy. I think heads will be wary of doing this. They may feel that their success would be diluted by taking over other schools."

Mr Blair, who promised at this year's party conference that his priorities would be "education, education and education", will make his speech at Ruskin College, Oxford, where 20 years ago the Labour prime minister, Lord Callaghan, made his famous attack on school standards.

Mr Blair will also make plain his intention to make the Department for Education and Employment a great office of state alongside the Treasury, the Foreign Office and the Home Office. This was foreshadowed last week in a speech by Professor Michael Barber, a Labour education policy adviser, who suggested that a Labour secretary of state for education might live in Downing Street and have the use of Chequers, the prime minister's country residence. It reflects the high es-

teem in which Mr Blair holds David Blunkett, Labour's education spokesman.

Under the plan for good schools to take over bad, failing schools would be identified by local authorities and successful headteachers from neighbouring schools would be asked to tender for contracts to take them over. Mr Sutton said he thought the only aspect of the scheme that might interest secondary heads was taking over some responsibility for feeder primary schools.

There have been repeated complaints from secondary headteachers about low standards of literacy and numeracy among pupils entering their schools. Another incentive might be the need to ensure a good supply of pupils to their own school in competitive times.

Research shows that a good head is one of the most important factors in a school's success. Local authorities already remove those in charge of failing schools. Labour's proposal comes only weeks after a new head was brought in to restore discipline at Rulings School in Halifax, West Yorkshire. The incomer is Peter Clark, head of a local grant-maintained school.

Labour has already said that it will close failing schools and reopen them under new heads and governing bodies. A head who took over a failing school would be able to sack teachers and the remaining staff would be deployed across both schools. If the school still failed it would be shut down.

Mr Blair will call for a new consensus in education and the end to battles between right and left, teachers and politicians which have been a feature of the last 30 years.

Leading article, page 11



Pupils with purpose: GCSE candidates at Grange Upper School attending the extra Sunday classes yesterday. Photograph: Tim Smith/Guzelian

Sunday lessons aim to raise standards



Wahid Akhtar, administrator of the Sunday scheme which uses teachers from the Bradford Study Support Network

Judith Judd

Inner city schools throughout the country are trying to improve their exam results by teaching pupils for longer hours. The West Yorkshire comprehensive which has decided to open on Sundays is the latest example of this use of extra schooling.

Grange Upper School in Bradford which came near the bottom of last month's school examination performance tables is preparing its GCSE candidates by giving them extra lessons in maths, English, science and personal and social development on Sundays. About 85 per cent of the school's pupils are Muslim and many speak English as a second language.

After-school homework clubs where GCSE pupils can do supervised homework and re-

ceive extra tuition are becoming increasingly common especially for inner-city pupils. The Prince's Trust has funded a number of homework clubs, including some in Bradford. A two-year evaluation of the project by Professor John MacBeath of Strathclyde University found that nine out of ten pupils through the scheme increased their chances of passing exams.

Homework clubs are usually held at the end of the school day, but some local authorities - such as Birmingham - are laying on extra activities at weekends. Birmingham Children's University offers primary pupils many subjects from maths to drama on Saturday mornings, and offers summer holiday workshops.

Birmingham city council also combines with the Asian and Afro-Caribbean communities to fund Saturday supplementary schools in the basics. For secondary pupils, there is the University of the First Age, which offers additional opportunities for study in the summer holidays.

City Technology Colleges, set up by the Government with help from industry, stay open for longer hours than most state schools in an effort to raise standards.

Labour has promised summer schools to help pupils catch up with reading before they enter secondary school. However, research shows that there is no simple relationship between more work and higher standards. For example, school inspectors have emphasised in their reports that homework may be worthless if it is not well thought out.

Nurses to get power to give out drugs

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Nurses are to be given new powers to prescribe drugs under guidelines agreed with the GPs under the NHS White Paper due to be published tomorrow.

The aim of the White Paper, *Primary Care: Delivering the Future*, is to allow family doctors to expand their surgeries into cottage hospitals, capable of offering patients small operations, more clinics with hospital consultants, and specialist care such as sports clinics, without the need for expensive and distressing stays in hospital.

A bill is already going through the Lords to expand the range, but Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, will use the White Paper tomorrow to bring forward decisions which do not need legislation - in an attempt to put Labour on the defensive over the health service in the run-up to the election.

Labour is expected to see the White Paper as a diversion to keep attention off a threatened winter crisis in NHS hospitals, where GPs have been forced in some areas to delay operations for patients until next April when some of the extra £1.6bn for the NHS becomes available.

About 70 initiatives are to be taken during 1997 under the White Paper. Many are small detailed changes to raise the morale of GPs, but the overall aim is to neutralise family doctors as an election issue before the campaign begins in earnest.

The White Paper will deliver many items which have been on the GPs' shopping list for some time, including more incentives to rejoin practices after career breaks to start a family, more retraining, a doubling to £50m of the money for research and development, and inclusion in the NHS pension scheme for practice teams.

The plans include extending the existing nurse prescribing pilot scheme from April 1997 in 500 GPs' practices where a total 1,500 nurses will be given prescribing power.

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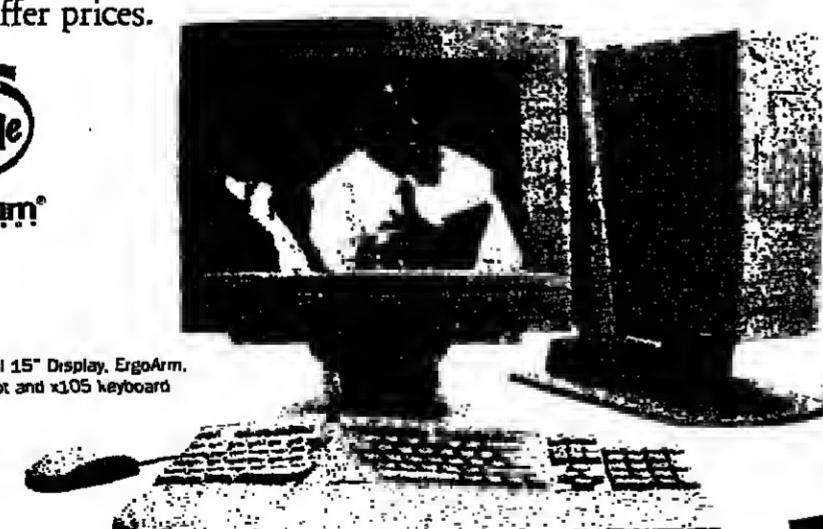
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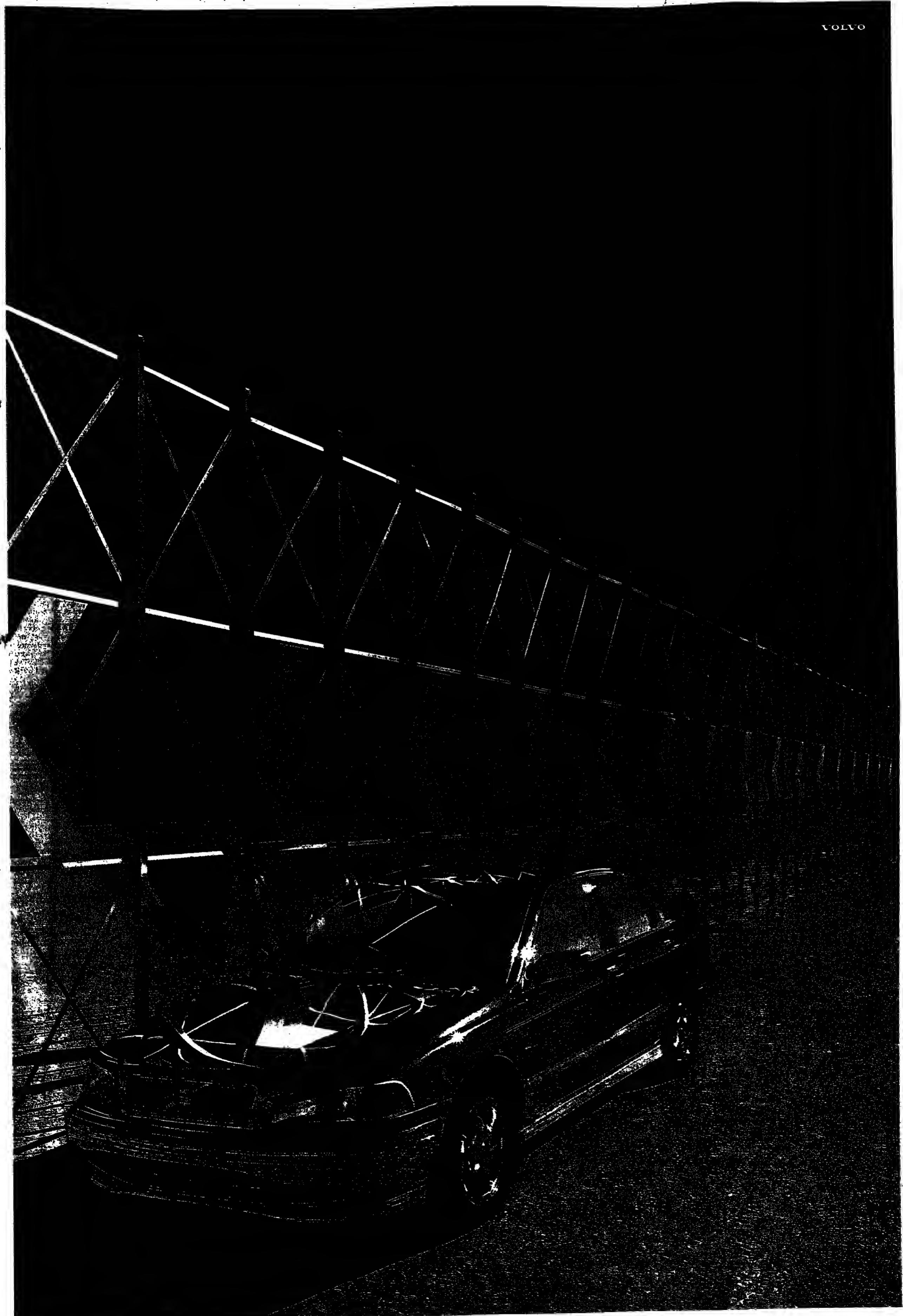
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Stepping out: Costumes that Leon Bakst designed for the character Echo in *Narcisse* (left); Zobeide in *Scheherazade*; and for *The Sleeping Princess*. Photographs: Sotheby's

Ballet designs draw big money

Marianne Macdonald
Arts Correspondent

Leon Bakst's costume design for the ballet of *The Firebird*, an extravagant conception which created the effect of the dancer's head emerging from a bird's body goes up for sale on Thursday evening. Wealthy collectors and auction houses need apply. It is estimated at up to £35,000.

The magical green, red and gold design was created by Diaghilev's favourite costume designer in 1910 for the ballet based on a Russian fairy story and set to music by Stravinsky.

Oscar Blumenthal, a ballet historian, who saw it performed in London with Karsavina in the principal role, wrote: "The costume which Bakst designed for Karsavina was a charming conception... She wore a greenish bodice, the top edge trimmed with feathers, the lower ending in a train of swansdown fitting close to the hip..."

Five other ballet costume designs by Bakst are included in the Russian sale at Sotheby's.



The headpiece of Bakst's design for *The Firebird*

Among them are his elaborate Persian costume for the character of Zobeide from *Scheherazade*, complete with turban, cape and red pantaloons (estimated at up to £30,000) and the Hellenic transparent blue dress and cloak he designed for the character of Echo from *Narcisse* (up to £2,000).

AP Wirephoto

Recycling in London to get £35m help

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

The Government will today announce a multi-million pound grant to boost recycling. The plan is that three years from now the great majority of Londoners will be served by door-to-door collection schemes for waste cans, paper and glass and plastic bottles.

The rapid expansion of recycling should create 1,500 jobs, drastically reduce litter and bring recycling industries into the capital. There are plans for a paper mill supplied with local waste paper, a plastics processing plant and an electronics recycling facility in Hackney which would each year scrap hundreds of thousands of old computers, which contain small quantities of precious metals.

The strategy comes from a consortium of businesses and almost all of London's 33 boroughs. It has been worked up with support from the Government and its Environment Agency. The boroughs have bid for £35m of City Challenge cash to be spent over the next three years, £10m in the first year. Today, the Secretary of State for the Environment, John Gummer, who has followed the bid closely, will grant a large part of what they want.

Haringey councillor Nicky Gavron said: "This is about creating jobs in London, bringing in the industries of the future and greening the capital using a partnership between the boroughs, government and business." She co-chaired the consortium with former Grand Metropolitan chairman, Lord Allen Sheppard.

Recycling has been growing fast in London but it still stands at only 7 per cent of the 3.4 million tons of waste pouring out

of the capital each year. Most goes to landfill sites in other counties, but this is becoming more expensive as the dumps fill up, more distant replacements have to be found and the landfill tax introduced two months ago starts to bite.

London has Europe's largest recycling resource. But the 7 per cent collected almost all goes outside the capital for processing. For instance, much of the paper goes to a huge new newspaper mill near Maidstone in Kent.

The plan is to raise the amount of materials being collected by recycling from 200,000 tons a year to 500,000 by March 2000. To achieve that, 30 of the boroughs will have "multi material kerbside collection" for household plastic and glass bottles, cans and waste paper.

The consortium also wants to increase composting of garden waste, vegetable peelings and bread stalks in three years, to 200,000 tons. It foresees 40 per cent of homes with gardens having a compost bin, compared with 10 per cent now.

Robin Murray, a consultant who has done most of the detailed preparation on the scheme, said recycling's greatest pitfall was "booms and busts", in which those who build up collections suddenly find the market saturated. "The all-important thing is to build up the supply and demand simultaneously and give both sides of the market long-term confidence," he said.

Since 1990, the Government's target has been for 25 per cent of household refuse to be recycled by 2000. Bath and Richmond, in south-west London, already achieve that, but it looks unlikely that most councils will hit the target. Several London boroughs, including Islington, recycle less than 3 per cent.

Silcott conviction may go to appeal

Ian Burrell

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, is to consider new evidence that could lead to Winston Silcott's outstanding murder conviction being referred to the Court of Appeal.

Silcott is at present in Maidstone prison, serving a life sentence for the murder of Anthony Smith, a boxer, at a party in 1984. Two new witnesses have recently come forward to corroborate Silcott's claim that he killed in self-defence after being attacked by Smith and two others, all of whom were carrying knives.

A team of Metropolitan police detectives has conducted interviews with the new witnesses and a third party-goer who has expanded on previous statements to support Silcott's version of events.

The police file will be passed to the Home Office this month and Mr Howard will consider

whether there are grounds for the case to be reheard.

Silcott's supporters have been campaigning for four and a half years to have the Smith case tried again. If Silcott was to be cleared, it would be the third time he had been acquitted of a murder charge.

Silcott, 37, was convicted by a jury of the murder of PC Keith Blakelock, during the 1983 Broadwater Farm riot in Tottenham, north London. He was awarded £17,000 in compensation when the conviction was later overturned. In 1980, Silcott was cleared of the murder of Lennie McIntosh, a musician who was stabbed at a party.

The party at which Smith died took place 12 years ago this weekend in Hackney, east London. Silcott's supporters claim the fight was the result of a gang feud, which he became caught up in while trying to act as an honest broker.

After being tortured by Saddam Hussein Azad fled to Britain for help. Now he's being tortured by hunger.

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Holy Russia quashes alien worship

Phil Reeves
Moscow

In 1990, towards the end of decades of Soviet repression, Russia adopted a law guaranteeing religious freedom. The days of official harassment and KGB meddling were over. The population could worship whomsoever or whatever it pleased. Or so it seemed.

Six years on, that right is being eroded. Free worship is under attack again, not this time by a bullying central party but by Russia's scores of far-flung regional governments, where democratic reforms have yet to supplant Communist-era attitudes and where many of the old *apparatchiks* remain in power.

A brace of regional laws is gradually being introduced restricting the rights of minority churches, in an effort to protect the Russian Orthodox Church, which is closely linked to the state, from outside competition. Provincial government posts are being created to allow officials to keep an eye on religious activity.

Each separate development pales by comparison to the wild excesses of the Communist Party or Stalin during Soviet times. The issue has been brought to light by the Keston Institute, a respected independent research centre based in Oxford, which was in the forefront of the campaign against religious repression under Soviet rule. Research by its Moscow representative, Lawrence Uzzell, estimates that a quarter of Russia's 89 regions and

republics have adopted measures that restrict the right to freedom of worship.

In some regions, local officials have taken powers which allow them to regulate foreign and domestic clergy and even to impose a ban if they disapprove of their activities. These include laws stating that missionaries must have an annual certificate of accreditation.

In other cases, local authorities, which still own most large civic buildings in provincial Russia, can now legally forbid religious groups from renting

their properties for church services. There are laws denying registration to churches which the authorities decide are committing such vague offences as "promoting disobedience to state authorities" or "encouraging citizens to refuse to carry out their civic or family obligations".

Such laws not only contradict the 1990 law, they are also flagrantly ignore the Russian constitution, adopted three years ago, which guarantees universal religious freedom. "The rapid spread of such measures

and the courts' failure to curb them, suggests that Russia is not even trying to become a state governed by law," Mr Uzzell said.

Despite widespread secrecy among regional governments – some of which refuse even to reveal the text of their legislation – he has assembled specific examples. In Sverdlovsk, individuals or organisations who provide meeting places for missionary activities are required to tell the local authorities. In Tver, an executive order has been issued denying accreditation to structural sub-units of foreign religious organisations located outside the border of the Russian Federation" – a catch-all clause that could include those with deep roots in Russia, such as Catholicism.

So why is it happening? One explanation is a fear of cults, which have burgeoned since the fall of the Soviet Union. But it has more to do with the reflex habit of Soviet-era *apparatchiks* to regulate religion in the interests of the state. That, and the nationalist-leaning Orthodox Church's anxiety to

maintain its position in a country where there are now a million non-Orthodox believers.

"The church is paranoid about foreigners," Mr Uzzell said. "The spiritual expansion of the West is seen as part and parcel of its political and economic expansion. Just as in Soviet times, they see McDonald's executives, Baptist missionaries and western diplomats as part of one monolithic structure."

The Orthodox Church is strongly rumoured to be attempting to push legislation through parliament recognising only four official religions: Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism.

Muldoon's man rescues party that dumped him

Wellington — The late Sir Robert Muldoon, the populist who ruled over New Zealand from 1975 to 1984, must have chuckled in his grave as the country's new cabinet was announced yesterday.

There, as Deputy Prime Minister, was his protégé, Winston Peters, propping up the National Party government that, to Sir Robert's dismay, had sacked him from its cabinet five years ago.

Moreover, Mr Peters was holding the new Treasurer's portfolio, arguably the most important post in government, able to dictate financial and economic policy and write future budgets – equal to the power Sir Robert held as Minister of Finance.

It was a remarkable comeback for Mr Peters, sacked from the cabinet by Jim Bolger, the Prime Minister, for persistently criticising government policy in 1991 and expelled from the National Party's parliamentary group the following year.

Now, Mr Bolger and the Nationals are beholden to him and the rival New Zealand First party he founded for keeping them in office after the inconclusive general election on 12 October.

The new party's 17 MPs held the balance of power after the election, the first under the German-style mixed member proportional (MMP) voting system. After eight weeks of secret tortuous negotiations they decided to form a coalition with the

Cabinet deal is sweet revenge for leader of New Zealand First, reports David Barber

conservative Nationals, who have ruled for the past six years, rather than the Labour Party, the main opposition group.

It was a sweet deal for a party only three-and-a-half years old which had only two MPs after the previous election in 1993. In the cabinet announced yesterday, New Zealand First had five out of 20 members, three of them Maoris – Mr Peters, John Delamere, who became associate treasurer and Ta Henare, given the Maori affairs portfolio. The party won two other ministerial posts outside the cabinet.

Mr Peters had the added pleasure of forcing his former colleagues to drop many of the policies he criticised that led to his ousting from the party.

Having campaigned on their record of fiscal responsibility, the Nationals not only created the new Treasurer's post for him, they christened it with NZ\$5bn (£2bn) of extra spending to meet NZ First's policy demands. Scheduled income tax cuts – a key plank of National's manifesto – were deferred to

land compensation claims – all National Party stubbleots until this week.

They agreed to relax their inflation target of 0-2 per cent, ditch health reforms (including running public hospitals on profit-driven lines), to abolish a surtax on pensions and to lift a NZ\$1bn sale linked to Maori

and Jenny Shipley, health minister, have been venomous since he was thrown out. During the campaign, he told voters NZ First was the only party that could get rid of the National government and disavowed any intention of entering a coalition

within. He declared Mr Bolger unfit for his job and said: "If anyone seriously believed that NZ First regards the prospect of siding up to Bolger, Birch and Shipley, then they have been out in the sun for far too long."

They responded with con-

tempt. Mr Bolger dubbed his former Minister of Maori Affairs a racist for running a virulent anti-immigration campaign and Mr Birch called him a "poll-driven fruit fly". Like his mentor Sir Robert, Mr Peters has a knack of developing issues that serve him well in opinion polls. His campaign to check immigration and foreign investment on the theme "Whose country is it anyway?" sent his party's support up to 90 per cent of the vote earlier this year.



Day of triumph: Ousted by the Nationals, Winston Peters returns to their administration as Deputy Prime Minister. His new party has a quarter of cabinet seats. Photograph: Reuter

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Annan to press for UN brigades

David Usborne
New York

Kofi Annan, the next Secretary General of the United Nations, will press for the creation of standby military brigades as in as many as 20 member countries – with Britain possibly included – that could be instantly deployed on peacekeeping missions requested by the UN Security Council.

Speaking to *The Independent* within hours of his selection by the Security Council last Friday to replace Boutros-Ghali, Mr Annan also signalled that he will be a vigorous defender of the UN. In comments that often seemed aimed at the United States, he warned against using the UN as a scapegoat for missions that go wrong and rejected the premise

that UN reform must mean cuts in budgets and manpower.

He was most blunt, however, about peacekeeping, noting the failure of the world community to avert the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. "It was unforgivable. Sooner or later we will realise that we cannot let the brush fires go on without any attempt to contain them. If no country – not even the United States – is prepared to play the international cop, then the only alternative is United Nations peacekeeping".

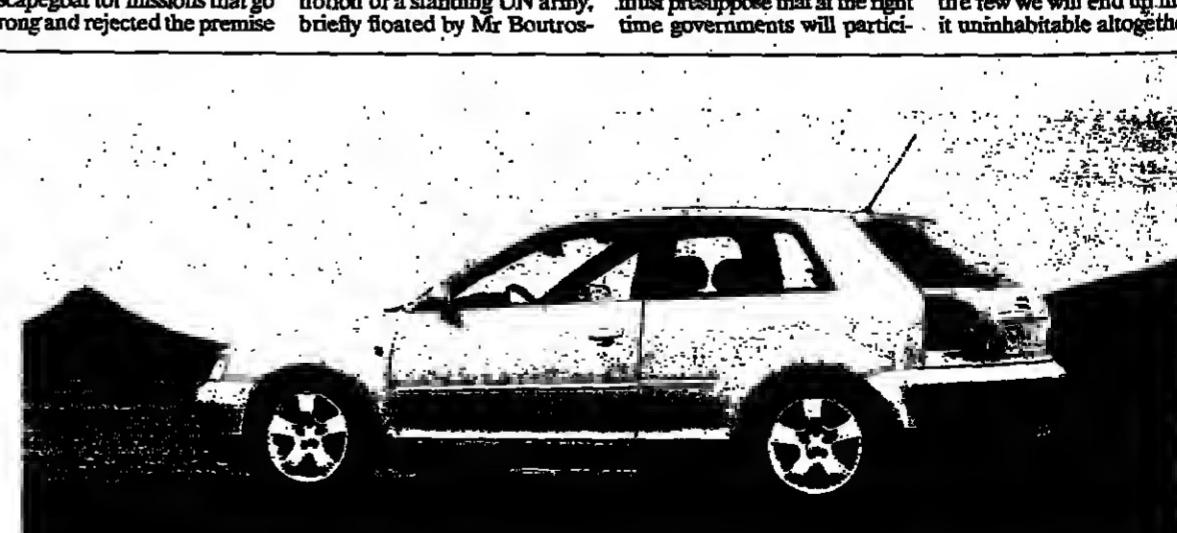
Mr Annan, who has been in charge of UN peacekeeping since 1993 and has thus suffered personally the humiliations of recent blue-helmet missions in Bosnia, Somalia and Central Africa, said he accepted that the notion of a standing UN army, briefly floated by Mr Boutros-

Ghali, was too ambitious. But he observed that some countries, including Denmark, have already created brigades that are on permanent standby to help the UN or other bodies such as Nato in case of sudden need around the globe.

"We are encouraging governments to prepare rapidly deployable brigades or battalions and we are trying here to create a rapidly deployable mission headquarters," he suggested.

Persuading states actually to commit soldiers to individual operations will, he acknowledged, always be difficult. He noted that 30 governments had been ready in principle to join a UN force for Rwanda but that none, when the moment arrived, had come forward. "But what we do now must presuppose that at the right time governments will participate even as a scapegoat."

Asked if he has any guiding principle for the UN, Mr Annan borrowed a phrase from the late French President François Mitterrand. "He put it beautifully when he said: 'If we buy into the illusion that we can make the world inhabitable for the few we will end up making it uninhabitable altogether.'"



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the vanishing place
Israeli
launched
strikes
Lebanon

The vanishing peace: Months after Netanyahu came to power, the Middle East slides back to confrontation

Israelis launch strikes in Lebanon

Eric Silver
Jerusalem

Six months after Binyamin Netanyahu was sworn in as Prime Minister, Israel is rushing from a prospect of peace towards violent confrontation with its Arab neighbours.

In the north, ambushes, air strikes and exchanges of fire in southern Lebanon, with a steady trickle of casualties on both sides, are settling into a daily routine. Even the assiduous Americans are no longer trying to bring Israel and Syria back to the negotiating table. It is considered an achievement that they have stopped rattling sabres at each other.

On the Palestinian front, Yasser Arafat is increasingly frustrated at what he sees as Mr Netanyahu's retreat from the Oslo accords. The Prime Minister's cheer-leaders have ceased predicting that an agreement to redeploy Israeli troops from Hebron, the last West Bank city still under occupation, is just around the corner.

Relations between Israel and the two Arab states with which

it has signed peace treaties – Egypt and Jordan – are becoming cooler by the day. King Hussein of Jordan, who last summer urged Arab leaders to give Mr Netanyahu time to prove his peaceful intentions, is openly disenchanted. Other Arab rulers in the Gulf and North Africa, who established trade or quasi-diplomatic ties, are keeping their distance.

For the first time since Israel's ill-starred Operation Grapes of Wrath seven months ago, Katyusha rockets were fired into northern Israel from Lebanon on Friday night.

George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine,

which killed an Israeli mother

and son in a West Bank drive-

by shooting two days earlier,

claimed responsibility. Al-

though no casualties were re-

ported, Israel has lodged a

complaint with the interna-

tional monitoring groups set up

after the spring cease-fire.

On Saturday, an Israeli con-

voy ran into a Hezbollah ambus-

h in the self-proclaimed south

Lebanese security zone. The

Shiite militia wounded two



Lessons of war: An Israeli soldier stands guard yesterday over a group of Palestinian students and their lecturer during a tutorial outside the university in Hebron, still awaiting a date for the Israeli forces to be withdrawn. A suicide bomber at the university caused 63 deaths in March

Photograph: Khaled Zighar/AP

people, including Israel's re-

gional commander, Brigadier-General Eli Amitai. In the ensuing fight, two Hezbollah men were killed. A third Lebanese fighter was gunned down by an Israeli mopping-up team yesterday.

Later yesterday Israel retali-

ated for the ambush with air strikes on Hezbollah targets north-east of the security zone. The sites, outside populated areas, were said to have been used by Hezbollah either as staging posts for attacks or as ammunition stores.

During a condolence visit to

the bereaved West Bank settler family in Beit El yesterday, the Defence Minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, reiterated that Israel would step up building within existing Jewish towns and villages there.

In an interview with the mass-circulation Israeli daily, *Yediot*

Aharonot, Mr Arafat accused Mr Netanyahu of playing with fire by restoring incentives to settle. "Netanyahu knows that this is a time bomb," he said.

He added: "If King Hussein

is speaking as he is about Netanyahu, we have apparently reached the hour of crisis. In the end, it will be impossible to stop the downward flight. After the dead are laid to rest, we shall be standing in the same place."

Dubai (Reuters) — Iran's supreme leader, ignoring President Bill Clinton's assertion that he has not yet concluded

who was responsible for a bomb

that killed Americans in Saudi Arabia, said the US was preparing an attack on his country.

"The American administration... has decided to strike," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told Revolutionary Guards. "They did not say so but evidence indicates this."

Rifkind steps into Cyprus labyrinth

Tony Barber
Nicosia

Malcolm Rifkind, yesterday, played down hopes of a breakthrough in the Cyprus dispute as he began the first official visit to the divided island by a British foreign secretary in more than 30 years.

"I want to encourage progress towards a resumption of dialogue, but I have no doubt that there will only be progress if the leaderships and the people of Cyprus want progress," he said. "The outside world, whether it be the United Nations, the United Kingdom or the United States, can only take the process forward if there is the political will on the island."

Mr Rifkind plans separate meetings today with Giafas Clerides, the Greek-Cypriot President of the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus and with Rauf Denktash, leader of the separatist "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus", which no country except Turkey recognises.

Mr Rifkind hopes to per-

sonally meet the two to open direct talks on a comprehensive settlement early next year.

Cyprus has been divided since a Greek-sponsored coup in 1974, which prompted a Turkish invasion and occupation of the northern third of the island. The UN has repeatedly tried to reunite the island, but tension remains high and in August the worst violence since 1974 erupted along the UN-patrolled zone dividing the Greek and Turkish-Cypriot sectors.

significant shorts

French set to mend fences with the US

France's Foreign Minister, Hervé de Charette, set out for Washington today on a mission bearing all the hallmarks of an emergency fence-mending exercise. Officially, he heads the French delegation to a 30-nation Friends of Lebanon conference but he will spend barely a day in Washington, and the more likely reason is France's desire to resolve an incident highlighting the abject state of Franco-US relations. Mr de Charette reportedly left a lunch at the Atlantic Council in Brussels last Tuesday before a toast to his outgoing US counterpart, Warren Christopher.

Mary Dujersky - Paris

Britons held in \$50m drug bust

Three Britons have been arrested in Colombia as they allegedly tried to smuggle out \$50m (£33m) of cocaine, officials said at the weekend. Michael Hayne, his son Alan and a third man, David Maurice Shaw, were seized by agents of the DAS security

service on the quay in Barranquilla. A DAS spokesman alleged 427lb of high-purity cocaine was found aboard their US-registered boat.

Reuter - Bogota

Mexican party leader ousted

After a string of electoral losses and defections of officials, the head of Mexico's long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party resigned. Santiago Onate Laborde's departure was seen as an attempt to stop the party's grip on power weakening. Insiders blamed him for much of its trouble.

AP - Mexico City

Russians free pro-green spy

Russia freed a retired naval officer accused of treason and espionage for helping a Norwegian environmental group. Alexander Nikitin had been in jail since his arrest in February for helping the Bellona group with a report on radioactive contamination from Russia's Northern Fleet. He was not charged until autumn.

AP - St Petersburg

Teamster boss claims victory over Hoffa's son

The Teamster union president, Ron Carey, declared victory over the son of Jimmy Hoffa, promising to press on with fighting corruption. "This is... a victory for all working people who want strong, honest unions," he said as supporters cheered his claim of election to a second term.

AP - Washington

Guide dies as cable-cars fall

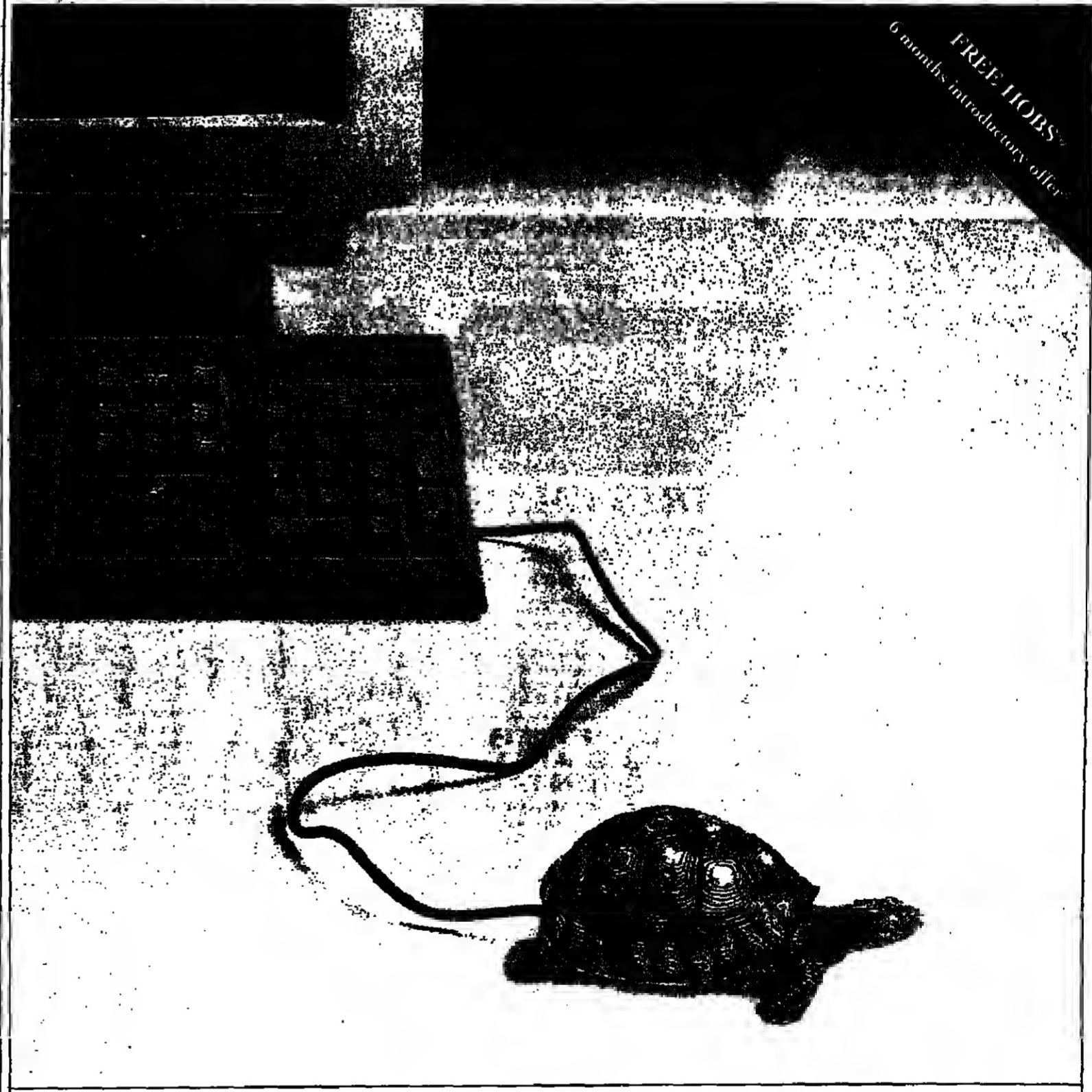
Three gondolas carrying skiers in the Swiss canton of Valais plummeted from the ground, crushing a local guide and injuring 18 people.

Reuter - Zurich

From dolly to hospital trolley

A crowd rushing for "Tickle Me Elmo" dolls trampled a toy-store employee, sending the man to hospital. The store had a sale for 48 of the dolls, one of the hottest items in the US this Christmas.

AP - Frederick



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international

Crushed in Suharto's iron grip

Richard Lloyd Parry
reports the first direct evidence of what has been mere rumour until now: five months ago, Indonesian security forces connived in the brutal murders of unarmed opposition demonstrators

The young man in the bandana, like everyone else in the building, was highly excited. "Maybe they will attack," he said. "It's difficult to tell. But we believe in God here, and God will be our friend. I think everyone here is ready to die; they're ready to give their last drop of blood."

This was the headquarters of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) in central Jakarta on the evening of 26 July. For the past month it had been the scene of an event unprecedented in modern Indonesia: a large-scale, pro-democracy demonstration, a peaceful, but thinly veiled, challenge to the 30-year rule of President Suharto.

The walls of the red-tiled bungalow were festooned with banners bearing slogans like "Megawati Sukarnoputri is the Last Hope" and "A Democratic State for the Sovereignty of the People". Well-wishers had turned out from all over the country, cars honked their horns in support as they drove past. The atmosphere was giddy and celebratory; none of these people, it was clear, really thought that they were going to die.

Two days later the scene was very different. The PDI headquarters was a wreck,



Voice of struggle: Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of Indonesia's founding president, and an increasing threat to the 30-year rule of President Suharto

Photograph: Reuter

its banners torn down and burnt, its tables, chairs and even walls smashed by an armed mob under the protection of the police. Many of those present the night before had been beaten up and arrested. And, according to eyewitnesses interviewed by *The Independent*, unknown numbers had

been beaten or stabbed to death, with the apparent connivance of their own armed forces.

The incident was the climax of weeks of gathering tension in Indonesia, focusing on the figure of Megawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of Sukarno, modern Indonesia's founding president. Sukarno was deposed in

1965 by the then General Suharto who has maintained his authoritarian rule ever since under a veil of pseudo-democracy.

Parliamentary candidates must all be officially approved, and only three, government-licensed parties are permitted. Until recently, Suharto's Golkar party had gone undefeated, but

it was facing an increasingly serious challenge from Mrs Megawati's PDI. In an attempt to deprive her of her power base, the government put its weight behind a rival PDI faction and had her deposed at a special party congress in June.

The reaction to this crude

piece of political fixing exceeded all expectations. All over the country, Megawati supporters occupied the party offices. More worryingly, in Jakarta they established a "free speech forum" in the courtyard in front of the headquarters. "We have to be very careful not to cross the line," said one of the forum's organisers. "We can never mention overthrowing the government, or the president, or the President's family. We talk about democracy and corruption. Corruption is code for the President and his family."

Spokesmen for the govern-

ment and Abri, the powerful Indonesian armed forces, had made it clear that they regarded the occupation as illegal and police action had been anticipated for several weeks. At the end of July, however, Jakarta had important guests in town – the foreign ministers of the Association of South East Asian Nations' Regional Forum, an international conference which brought together foreign ministers from 19 governments, including the US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, and Ireland's Dick Spring, representing the European Union.

At the closing press conference, the Indonesian foreign minister, Ali Alatas, dismissed speculation that force would be used to break up the PDI sit-in.

"This government acts in a way that all governments act, to prevent this situation spilling over into – how do you call it? – general happenings," he said. "We're trying to make sure that a solution to this problem can be found in a situation of legality and public order."

Two days after the departure of the international VIPs, the "solution" began. At about 6.15am on 27 July, in the first of several acts of passive collaboration with the attackers, police – who had sealed off the street outside the PDI head-

quarters – let through several trucks. Some 200 young men got out, carrying sticks and dressed in red T-shirts identifying them as supporters of Mrs Megawati's factional rival, Suryadi. The identity of these thugs remains a mystery, but several witnesses accused their cropped hair and "military bearing".

Riot police appeared on the

scene and looked on as the Suryadi supporters began

throwing stones into the courtyard. "I saw the Suryadi people

throw Molotov cocktails, and the awning over the court-

yard caught fire," says Dr Djajat.

"The police kicked in the door

of Dr Djajat's first-aid room and was threatened with a stone.

But an officer intervened and he

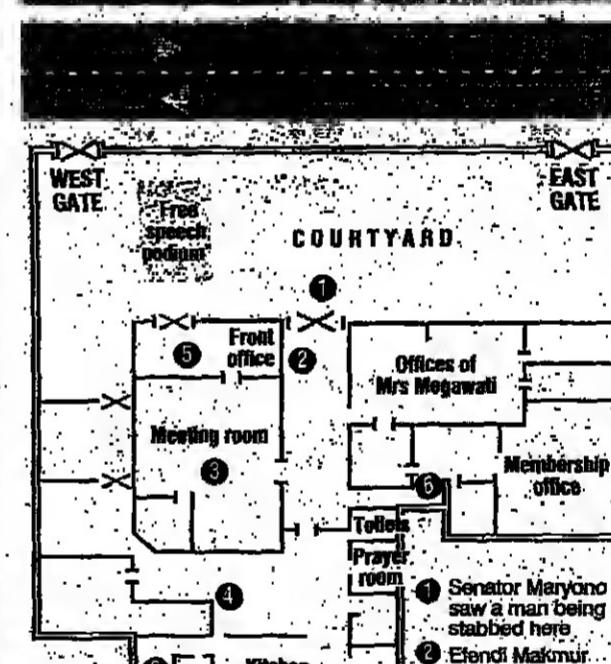
was allowed to leave the com-

plex. All the injured which he

treated had been caused by

flying stones and pieces of pave-

Where they died



• Senator Maryono saw a man being stabbed here
• Efendi Makmur saw a man being stabbed here
• A man died in the arm of Sandra Putusari Putri here
• Dr Djajat Hersamsi set up his first aid station here
• Efendi Makmur and others escaped here
• Sudjo Muslim saw five people being stabbed here

us, I saw Abri officers standing in the road opposite. They just watched. They did nothing."

After an hour and a half, there was a ceasefire. Two of the Megawati faction leaders went out to negotiate with the officers, and during the talk a retired

ment, but as the police and Suryadi supporters entered the headquarters they engaged the defenders with batons, ratta

cans and, according to some witnesses, bayonet-style knives.

Senator Maryono, a 39-year-old chauffeur from East Java,

was running into the building when he saw one of the defenders being stabbed by a Suryadi supporter. Just inside the door of the headquarters, Mr Maryono himself was gashed on the head with a knife. A second blow, with a stick or cane, knocked him out.

He came round in the Gatot Subroto Central Army Hospital at about 3pm with 16 stitches and a bandage on his head. As he walked around the emer-

gency ward, he saw 15 stretchers being carried in. He

recognised some of the victims, all unconscious and bleeding, as fellow PDI defenders.

Three other witnesses, who insisted on remaining anonymous, told *The Independent* that they had seen knives being used; two of them claimed they had witnessed multiple murder.

Mr Makmur and Mr Maryono were among the witnesses who testified under oath at the trials last month of 124 Megawati supporters arrested on 27 July. Another witness, Sandra Putusari Putri, told the court that a man had died in her arms from a head injury. The

Diary of dissidence

June: Megawati Sukarnoputri, head of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), ousted at government-backed congress. Her supporters occupy party HQ and establish a "free-speech forum" in Jakarta.

25 July: Asian Regional Forum of International Foreign Ministers ends.

27 July: 6.15am. Youths attack PDI HQ. 8.30am: Police break into HQ with stone-throwing youths. Witnesses allege sticks and knives used to attack and kill Megawati supporters.

8.30 to 9am: Police arrest injured Megawati supporters. Noon: Thousands gather near PDI HQ, stoning police, chanting: "Military murderers". Afternoon: About 10,000 people riot. Five die – accidentally.

29 July: NGOs express fears for missing PDI supporters. **30 July:** Armed forces announce rioters will be shot on sight. **31 July:** Military blames riots on Communists. Trade unionist Muchtar Pakpahan tells *Independent* that PDI members were killed, but is arrested soon after.

1 August: Legal case brought by Megawati is halted after judge goes down with "toothache". **2 August:** Left-wing activists arrested.

11 October: Bishop Carlos Belo and Jose Ramos-Horta are awarded Nobel Peace Prize for work in East Timor.

12 October: National Commission on Human Rights criticises government complicity in violence and lists 5 killed and 23 missing.

November: 124 supporters of Megawati convicted of obstructing the police on 27 July. All are released.

December: Subversion trials begin in Jakarta.

PDI official in charge of the defence of the headquarters, Sasi-jo Muslim, claims he saw five knife attacks, including one man whose throat was cut as he was held down in a chair.

Even the eyewitnesses themselves have no clear idea of how many people might have died. Nobody, it is clear, had more than a partial view of what happened, and the official figures for the dead and missing are confused and contradictory.

According to the Indonesian government, there were no fatalities during the assault, although four people died accidentally in the confusion.

A report on the affair published in October by the National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR), a government-sponsored body which has won respect for its investigations, put the number of dead at five, but also listed 23 people who had gone missing on the day.

NCHR officials have told foreign diplomats that this is a conservative figure and they expect to see it rise as more families come forward. PDI officials say that they believe 40 people are missing, presumed dead.

What exactly happened that morning remains confused, with many unanswered questions.

Foreign journalists and diplomats were kept 250 yards away from the headquarters during the assault, and saw bodies being stretchered away, but no obvious fatalities. *The Independent* entered the courtyard an hour and a half after the last of the Megawati faction had been removed. The area was awash with water from fire hoses, but there was no visible blood.

Apart from the NCHR lawyers, doctors and journalists investigating the affair have encountered a wall of silence from official sources. When *The Independent* visited the hospital where Mr Maryono was treated, it was told by doctors that none of them had been on duty on 27 July and that in any case they could not comment as it was a "confidential problem".

At the instigation of Mrs Megawati, senior PDI officials are conducting their own investigation. "People are afraid, but slowly they are overcoming their fear," says Dr Djajat. "Eventually we believe we will get to the truth."

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هذا من الأصل

Eight out of ten for Labour on education

"I am concerned to find complaints from industry that new recruits from schools sometimes do not have the basic tools for the job." Thus Jim Callaghan, calling for a "Great National Debate" on education in 1976. At the time, Tony Blair was a rather anti-Callaghan pupil barrister who had only just joined the Labour Party. This morning, Mr Blair goes to Ruskin College, Oxford, where the last Labour Prime Minister gave his famous speech, to look back on 20 years which have done little to answer the complaint of industrialists.

Mr Blair will call for a "new educational consensus", which many have urged before. Well, consensus would be a fine thing, especially if the teaching profession and the politicians and the public could all agree: unfortunately, the history of education is littered with mistaken consensus, so Mr Blair should beware proclaiming one where none exists. The real question is not whether we agree on a new consensus, but whether we get effective action. If education is the fire in the Labour leader's belly, then he should get on and stoke it. Educational improvement, as any good headteacher knows, is all about leadership.

Indeed, Mr Blair does know that, because he will today elaborate Labour's plans for good headteachers to take over failing schools for a year to try to turn them round. David Blun-

ket has already proposed another option, the "fresh start", with failing schools getting a new head, governing body and some staff. In recent months, Labour has also floated homework clubs, summer schools, home-school contracts, "accelerated learning" for pupils who are good at certain subjects, an 8am start and "twinning" private schools with their public-sector counterparts. At least in this corner of the policy work's backyard, there is no lack of ideas in which to entangle yourself.

With education, the roles of the two main parties seem strangely reversed. The Conservatives behave like an opposition, launching a series of rhetorical strikes at a tangent to the core issues: "a grammar school in every town", whole-class teaching and caning. This last pitted the Education Secretary against the Prime Minister in a way which only heightened the sense that Gillian Shepherd was not in charge. And the whips' briefing for backbench Tory MPs seems to invite them to point out that "Labour runs education", because it controls most of British local government. In spite of having been in government for 17 out of the 20 years since Lord Callaghan first offended the teaching establishment with his criticism of "informal teaching methods", the Conservatives seem able only to argue that it is up to Mr Blunkett to sort out the mess.

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Yesterday, on Labour council did something about the state of children's education. Sixty pupils trooped into a Bradford school on a Sunday morning to study for their GCSEs. This is precisely the sort of idea that has been touted by Mr Blunkett and Professor Michael Barber, the leading Labour education adviser. Of course, part of the problem with the English education system is that it is hard enough to get children to go to school on the days they are supposed to be there, let alone entice them to take extra classes on Sundays. But Richard Thompson, the headteacher, has taken a step that other headteachers might want to follow.

Some of us will experience a sinking feeling at the thought of yet more schooling. Mr Blunkett already wants national guidelines recommending an hour-and-a-half's homework a night for secondary-school children, plus summer schools to enable children in difficulty to catch up. A lot of research into education suggests that simply increasing the amount of time spent on schoolwork does not raise standards. And we all know from personal experience that much of the time children spend at school is wasted, with actual

learning (if any) being concentrated in short bursts.

But Labour does seem to be developing a model of an education system which focuses time and resources where they are needed. Many children from deprived and ethnic minority backgrounds can benefit from extra school time. And it is levelling-up that the British state school system most needs if we are to raise performance overall. The Prince's Trust found that its homework clubs, by providing a quiet place with books, did help children whose homes were chaotic or whose parents were uninterested in educational achievement. And out-of-hours classes in English have been shown to help children for whom it is a second language. Professor Barber has further suggested that some schools might switch to the continental school day, which runs from 8am to 1pm, allowing less successful children to catch up with extra lessons and homework sessions in the afternoons, while their friends play sport or pursue other constructive interests.

Mr Blair's speech today is an opportunity to spell out the centrality of education in his ambitions for government. We know he feels passionately about the importance of a success culture in the nation's schools. We know that he has one of his most adroit front-benchers committed to the task. But there is still much that remains poorly

defined. Teachers want to know how Mr Blair would help with discipline - with the problem of preventing children from disrupting the education of others. Children and parents who want to achieve need to feel confident that the culture of state schooling under Labour would be unremittingly aspirational. But even with those caveats, it is hard to escape the conclusion that Labour's ideas are starting to look considerably more to the point than the Conservative nostalgia for grammar-school black gowns, swishing sticks and Latin verbs.

Round the bend? You soon will be .

You might be thinking, roll on the day when your on-board car computer reads the road signs and steers my vehicle for you. But think twice. How often do you find yourself baffled by road signs, or their absence? Isn't there every chance that the microchip will have you pottering round in tiny circles, or zooming at 70mph the wrong way down a motorway? No wonder some of us hanker for the old ways: a good map, a bad navigator, and a traditional Sunday afternoon row.

A minimum wage does help the poor

Sir: The Institute for Fiscal Studies has published a report hostile to the minimum wage, because it is not well targeted at the poor ("Minimum wage will aid well-off—not the poor", 13 December). The reason they give is that since many of the poor are not in jobs an increase in wage levels can do them no good. Further, claims the study, most of the benefits go to the well-off.

This attack on the minimum wage is misguided for a host of reasons. First, evidence by Holly Sutherland of Cambridge University (*New Economy*, Winter 1995) shows that as a proportion of income, the greatest benefit from a minimum wage does in fact go to households towards the bottom of the income distribution.

Second, the initial impact of a minimum wage should be judged on its impact on those currently in work and still in poverty. As Sutherland's work makes clear, among families where at least one person is in work the poor gain more than the rich from a minimum wage. To judge its first-round effect on what it does for those out of work is ridiculous.

Third, a key effect of raising the wage in jobs likely to be taken by the unemployed and the partners of the unemployed is that the incentive to work can be increased. The effects of a minimum wage in the medium term are therefore very likely to spread to those not currently in work.

Fourth, people who argue against a minimum wage must come clean. Either they do not care about poverty pay or they think there is another solution. The only things they come up with are more means-tested, in-work benefits. But used in isolation, these simply encourage employers to lower wages, since they are effectively being subsidised by the taxpayer. A minimum wage is an essential part of any strategy aimed at tackling poverty pay.

DON CORRY

Editor, *New Economy*

London WC2

Sir: So the Institute for Fiscal Studies thinks a minimum wage would be more help to the rich than the poor. Their reasoning is quaint: apparently, most of those who would benefit from a minimum wage are women, who are often not main breadwinners.

However, if you examine the effect on individuals or families rather than just households, the minimum wage proves far more effective in reducing poverty. The pooling of the earnings of several low-paid individuals into general household income disguises, but does not eliminate, the impact of low pay in generating poverty. The Rowntree Inquiry and Income and Wealth found that poverty rates amongst couples would have been up to 50 per cent higher without women's pay.

It is difficult to square the IFS conclusions with the official DSS statistics, which show that those in employment are the largest single group among Britain's 14 million poor. And the author's assertion that "obviously, a minimum wage will never be able to improve the incomes of those who do not work" ignores the reality of the life-cycle theory of poverty.

Those with low earnings during their working lives often have insufficient savings or pension rights to secure an adequate income in retirement. Families

dependent on the joint incomes of two wage-earners may be plunged into hardship if the arrival of children means that one of them has to leave the labour market.

A minimum wage cannot alone tackle Britain's endemic problem of poverty, and no serious proponent of the measure has ever suggested that it could. But it is an essential component of any programme designed to address poverty, alongside reform of the tax and social security system.

Despite all this, the main argument for a minimum wage is not just that it would help to alleviate poverty and social injustice, but that it would help to improve Britain's productivity and competitiveness.

CHRIS POND
Director, Low Pay Unit
London EC1

Guns are costly

Sir: In reply to J C Davison (letter, 12 December), a figure of £937.50 per gun is still unrealistically low. Some custom-modified pistols cost over £4,000 and this compensation is supposed to cover all the associated equipment (extra magazines, speed loaders, holsters, reloading equipment).

The press and some politicians have held the pistol up as evil in itself. This is certain to make the illegal ownership of pistols even more attractive to certain anti-social elements. If the removal of pistols from private ownership could prevent a repeat of the tragedy at Dunblane most shooters would hand them in without compensation. Most of us have children of our own.

ADJ GOLDRING
London E16

Anti-gays have got it wrong

Sir: John Lytle, and other moaning mimics of the "anti-gay" persuasion, seem to have missed the point ("Are homosexuals gay?", 13 December). It is not only gay young people who are swept away on the tide of hedonism, drug-taking, niche marketing etc.

Straight youngsters are also on the bandwagon. They're all victims of the free marketers who think making money out of sloopops is more important than the social implications. Being gay has nothing to do with it.

Gay people, like straight ones, grow out of the obsession with sex, drugs, rock 'n' roll. The only difference is that gay youths are much more at risk of HIV infection than their straight counterparts.

The lifestyle the "anti-gays" describe has little to do with those of us over 40, any more than the youth culture of non-gay young people has to do with their seniors.

And while we're at it, John Lytle's Friday column often reads like a paean to the lifestyle he purports to despise.

TERRY SANDERSON
(gay and staying that way)
London W3

Sir: Both John Lytle and Simon Edge appear trapped by essentialist discourse in what is a sterile debate between metropolitan poseurs ("Are homosexuals gay?", 13 December). There are plenty of men (such as myself) who are

happy to drink in both "straight" and "gay" bars, relate to both men and women, and don't have an obsessive hang-up with identity politics.

Most of us are too busy earning a living, and spend the rest of our time wondering why gay bars don't sell decent beer. To John and Simon I say: stop whingeing and get a life!

DR ALAN BULLION
Timbridge Wells, Kent

Reckless activists

Sir: Andrew Tyler takes Polly Toynbee to task for suggesting that animal rights activists use violent and extreme tactics (letter, 14 December). He then goes on to utilise the animal rights movement's favourite tactic – misrepresentation.

His claim of "three peaceful campaigners killed" suggests that these unfortunate deaths were a result of violence against them. Not true. Two of these campaigners acted recklessly, the third, unfortunately, was a teenager taken into a dangerous situation by adult campaigners.

Mr Tyler ignores the arson and criminal damage amounting to tens of millions of pounds and the reckless endangerment of human and animal life which are part of the ongoing campaign for animal "rights" – a spurious philosophy which has little to do with animal welfare.

JANET GEORGE
London SE11

Stop uprooting foreign children

Sir: Your correspondents regarding the adoption of children from other countries and the closure of the Overseas Adoption Helpline (letter, 11 December) infer that the children who are brought to this country for adoption would otherwise be the victims of "merciless exploitation by the marketers".

Yet are these well-meaning citizens not conspiring in similar exploitation in taking children from a poor country, on the basis, no doubt, that they are providing them with the opportunity of a good standard of life in a rich country?

It is in fact the rich exploiting the poor in the worst possible way by taking their children, a facet of British life in Victorian times which was conducted under the guise of moral welfare.

For decades and until the mid-Sixties, the children of the British poor were exported around the world to Canada and Australia by similar misguided altruists, and many children paid the price for such acts – separated from their parents, siblings, grandparents, and other relatives and having to adapt to different cultures and values. Many were abused by their new carers or were used as house servants and farm-hands.

It is surely wrong to wrench children from their cultural and racial origins and extended families and to deposit them in a strange and alien culture, and as such it appears dangerously close to

contravening the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

If these people genuinely want to help children, they should help them to attain a better standard of life in the country of their birth and cultural origins.

CHARLES PRAGNELL
Redcar, Cleveland

Backward step for history class

Sir: I felt sad when I read Paul Valley's article ("The day I learnt how to think straight" (9 December)). My mind returned to Schools Council Project History 13-16 – in the 1970s this project was being used by at least half the schools in the country.

The students used historical evidence to make their own interpretations of the past. We even managed to include the method in the CSE and O-level examinations.

I marked CSE papers, and the revelation of students' ability to make sense of evidence although from their level of literacy – they were certainly not in the top range of ability, is an abiding memory of fierce pleasure.

But then came the History Working Party and the new curriculum in 1990. No one involved in that earlier project was on the working party and the idea that history for students in school could be more than "Our Island Story" was lost. I hope teachers still find ways of teaching which give their students the same chances to think in history lessons as in the new CSE science lessons.

MISS M HODGES
St Ebbs, Oxford

Mahon strictures include drawings

Sir: James Hall suggests (letter, 12 December) that Sir Denis Mahon's generous proposed bequest to the National Art Collections Fund is marred by a condition that we should withdraw his pictures "from any institution which sold any painting from its permanent collection". He objects to Sir Denis's concentration on paintings, and regrets the exclusion of drawings, sculpture etc.

In fact, Sir Denis stipulates that the National Art Collections Fund should withdraw his pictures from institutions that dispose of any drawings as well as paintings from their permanent collections.

It is up to Sir Denis to lay down his conditions, which he has done with sufficient clarity to enable his intention to be carried out. The terms of his magnificent bequest naturally reflect his own areas of expertise and special interest – and certainly should not be construed as any judgement on his part on the relative merits of different art forms. The National Art Collections Fund's policy of supporting acquisitions of works of art of every type is in no way compromised by its respect for Sir Denis's personal wishes.

SIR NICHOLAS GOODISON
Chairman
National Art Collections Fund
London SW7

Kilt wrapped up

Sir: I do wish your Saxon contributors would get off our case in respect of the Celtic kilt. Our warrior ancestors did not wrap their kilts around their arms to fight because we could not afford targes (letter, 9 December) but because it was an ancient-old tradition for the Celts to fight stark naked, as the Romans noted.

Keeping hold of the kilt by wrapping it around our arms served another purpose: it prevented the thieving English from making off with it whilst we were otherwise engaged.

For the record, the Celts in Scotland wore the *leine chroich* (a long, saffron-coloured shirt) with the *feile* until about the 17th century, then the *breacan feile* and *feile beag* replaced the long saffron shirt and plaid.

Finally, to put your Saxon correspondent in his place, let me remind him that we have never been conquered by the English: our erstwhile monarch Seamus Stewart VI took over the English throne, and the union of the parliaments only took place because a verminous handful of traitorous Scottish "nobles" were bribed.

We have biblical memories for guides: the letterbox in which I place this note does not have "ERIT" on it.

WILLIAM CONBAILL
Paisley, Ayrshire

Old Tory tricks

Sir: In the early Eighties the Kensington Young Conservatives invited me, and other young people resident in the constituency, to a reception to meet our local MP.

At the reception we were each handed a letter voting for Margaret Thatcher, who was then Prime Minister, as Today Programme Personality of the Year ("BBC closes Today poll as Labour memo surfaces", 13 December). We were asked to sign it and post it to the BBC. I did not.

MIRANDA MOWBRAY
Bristol

essay

Europe: how the East was lost

There is a problem with being pro-European in the viciously anti-European climate now being whipped up in Britain. One feels obliged always to defend the European Union.

It is difficult to voice misgivings about the direction of EU policy without seeming to join in the feeding-frenzy which passes for analysis in some of our serious journals – to quote just one example, the *Sunday Times* believes that the Government's wait-and-see policy on the single currency is morally equivalent to the appeasement of Hitler.

Despite the modest progress made at the Dublin summit this weekend there are many good, pro-European reasons to be concerned about the EU's hazardous approach-run to the 21st century. There are at least three causes for pro-European anxiety at present. Taken together, they form an explosive cocktail.

First, patience with Britain on the Continent is wearing thin. A senior German official said recently: "You're now seriously getting on our nerves." Sure, everyone is waiting for a Blair government. But, talking to senior officials from other EU countries, you have a sense that fellow Europeans are already prepared to be impatient with Tony Blair. There is a desire for a new start, even a return to the show-me pragmatism which used to characterise British policy before it was buried by dogmatism.

But, 23 years after we joined,

there will be little sympathy for a new strain of centre-left British obstructionism. With a new Conservative government, certainly, but even with a Labour government, it is possible to construct a series of plausible time-lines for the next five to 15 years which end with Britain departing from the EU, or becoming so marginalised that it would amount to the same thing.

The rise of xenophobic forces in some Warsaw Pact countries is sufficient warning

Second, there is a danger that economic and monetary union (EMU) will create more barriers within Europe than it will dissolve. German concessions to France at the weekend, relaxing somewhat the disciplines for management of the single currency, make it more likely, not less, that the countries with weaker economies like Italy, and maybe Spain and Portugal, will be excluded. Germany will be in no mood to make further concessions.

The British government is right to warn that EMU could create semi-permanent division within the EU. If we had not cast ourselves as permanent, self-interested Jeremiads, our warnings might be taken more seriously. Much has been written about the twin domestic problems facing France, Germany and the other likely members of the single currency start-

ing line-up. They have just over 12 months to a) convince their doubting publics that the Euro is, despite those ugly notes, not funny money; b) squeeze their public spending to meet the targets for EMU membership.

These problems are real enough but can probably will be finessed by the French and Germans and at least six others. The third and perhaps most real danger is that the effect of such a fiasco – and the quarrels with the excluded nations – will absorb almost all available political oxygen in Europe up to the turn of the century. This is already starting to happen.

The important agenda for the streamlining of EU institutions is already being curtailed. Looming, inescapable problems such as the further reform of the EU's farm policy and 'budget' have not even been broached. The greatest risk – apart from the alienation of Italy and Iberia and further alienation of Britain – is a possibly fatal delay in the enlargement of the EU to the east.

Several EU national politicians have glibly asserted that the first of the former-Communist candidate countries will be able to join by the year 2000. This is manifest nonsense. With the delay in the negotiations on reform of EU decision-making and institutions (partly Britain's fault), but not wholly, negotiations on enlargement to the east cannot now begin until 1998 at the earliest. The unofficial target date for a first wave of Central and Eastern European entries – Poland? Hungary? the Czech Republic? Slovenia? – is now 2003. But officials in the European Commission and the applicant governments concede that this is also hopelessly unrealistic. The year 2010 is being bandied around. This

may be dangerously late. Can the Eastern European candidates hang on for that long?

Such expansion to the east – which received little more than lip service at the Dublin summit – is crucial. This enlargement – the fifth – is likely to be the most difficult to date (and the EU has, arguably, never recovered from the first, the British one). Quite apart from the low GNP per head of even the best-off candidate countries, they have lived for most of the past 50 years in a parallel and isolated political and economic universe. The efforts they need to make to bring their legal, political, economic and social attitudes and structures broadly in line with those of Western European countries is enormous. It is equivalent, in medical terms, to sowing back a severed arm: all the infinite political and economic capillaries and tendons, disconnected or withered away, for four decades and more of totalitarianism and state planning, have to be rebuilt and then re-connected.

The image of the severed arm is maybe fanciful but it has a kind of moral truth to it. If you visit Poland or Hungary or the Czech Republic, despite the political and economic differences inherited from the Cold War, you are clearly as much in Europe – socially, culturally, architecturally – as you were in Belgium or Spain. Healing the gash across the Continent is not just an option for the EU. If it lives up to its own self-stated aims – the promotion of prosperity and peace in Europe and the greater unity of European peoples – it has an obligation to absorb as many Central and Eastern European countries as are willing and able to meet the terms and rules of membership.

The candidate countries are already making great efforts. The need to bring their laws, institutions and economies closer to the EU status quo is exerting a beneficial effect. The EU provides a structure of rules and targets and standards for the candidate countries to work towards: in terms of commercial

law, manufacturing standards, environmental safeguards, transport infrastructure, democratic institutions. The EU also offers a clear economic and political prize. Without the EU, there would be the same desire on their part to re-engage with the West, but no clear pattern of how to do so.

But the would-be members cannot be expected to stay the course without a clear commitment from EU countries to open negotiations on membership in the near future and complete them by a reasonable date.

If a week is a long time in politics, then 13 years is a good as a century.

The EU has an obligation to absorb as many countries as are willing to meet the terms

Germany to create EMU makes it harder for them to contemplate the kind of concessions needed to put Eastern enlargement on a fast track. And so it goes on. The fiscal squeeze forced on Germany by the dash into EMU will make it extremely awkward for a future German government to agree even modest extra funding of the EU budget to admit three or four relatively poor countries. Germany is demanding that its large net contribution to the Brussels budget be cut in future years. The EMU birth pains threatened in France (equivalent to a belated and concentrated dose of Thatcherism) will make it all the harder for France to risk rural – on top of urban and suburban – interest by agreeing to another radical reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. Without reform of the CAP enlargement is a practical and financial ooo-starter. And so the circle continues.

Britain's voice and influence might have been crucial at this time. They may yet be so, if a Blair government can learn and win respect – rapidly. Generally, British pragmatism is an important ingredient in the formula for success in the EU (look at the 1992 single market programme and CAP reform, largely British-driven in their early stages). Its absence in recent years has been a tragedy for Europe.

British carping and negativity has been felt all the more bitterly because the rest of the EU is not fully confident (despite the 'bulldog exterior') about where it is going. That German quote – "You're now seriously getting on our nerves" – is rooted in Continental anxieties, as much as British absurdities. Hence the possibility that a Blair government might enjoy only a brief European honeymoon. A healthy dose of con-

structive pragmatism might yet help to sort out some of the EU conflicts and contradictions ahead. The danger is that, after all the dogmatism and negativity of the Major years, there may be little patience for any British criticism, however constructive.

The EU as it exists now will disappear over the 'next 15 years'. The centralised, lock-step, federal state envisioned by the Euro-sceptics is a fantasy. But the scale of the political building programme laid down by EU governments is huge: a single currency; institutional reform; CAP reform; budget reform; enlargement.

The forthcoming general election will solve nothing. The leading parties may successfully avoid Europe as the all-pervasive issue during campaigning. But, whether or not we join EMU, Europe will probably be the make-or-break issue at the UK election after the next – just after the turn of the century (earlier if Blair's majority is slender).

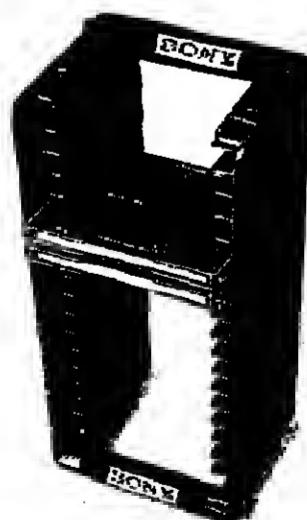
By the year 2010, the map of Europe will have changed radically, for good or ill. There are three of many possible scenarios, viewed from a shamelessly, hot critically, pro-European viewpoint:

● An optimistic scenario: Britain in EMU and at the heart of Europe again. EMU functioning well after painful beginnings. The EU enlarged to 19 or 20 countries. What are the chances of all this happening as things stand at the moment? Very poor.

● A pessimistic scenario: Britain marginalised or outside altogether. EMU working reasonably well for nine or ten other countries. The EU enlarged into central Europe. The chances: all too likely.

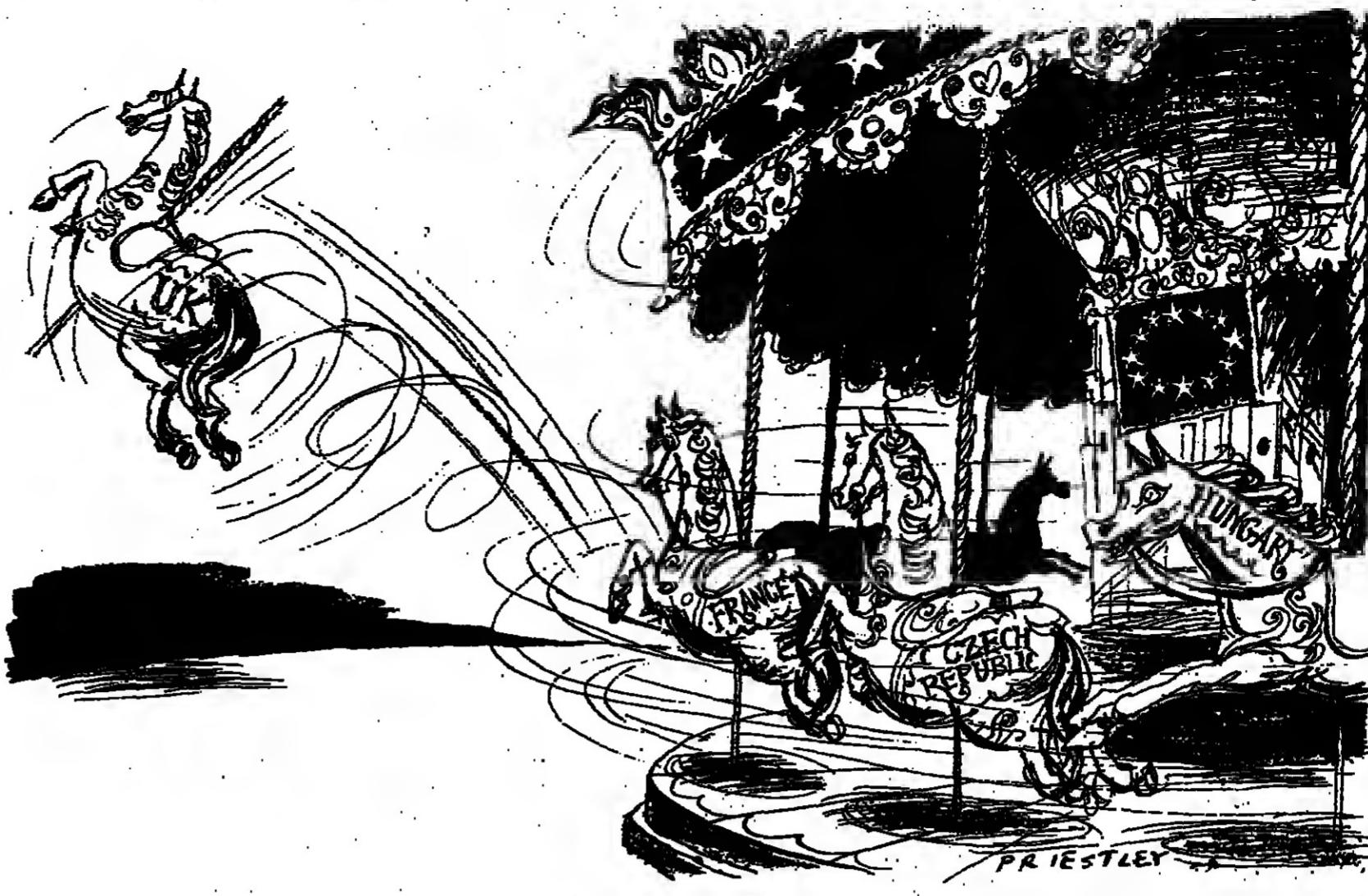
● A very pessimistic scenario: Britain cut or marginalised; a small *directive* of EMU states progressively alienating others, including Italy, Spain and Sweden. Enlargement botched or abandoned. The chances: not inevitable, but far greater than they should be for pro-European peace.

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SONY



A nightmare on Downing Street ...

The publishing success of *Little Ken at Number Ten* has been 'ghost bumps'. R.L. Stine's short modern ghost stories for children which give them a delicious scare without shocking them. At the end of each chapter, for instance, there is a sort of cliff-hanging horror which is gently defused at the start of the next chapter.

But why is there nothing for adults which cashes in on the same desire to have a skin-crawling fright which mixes the uncanny with the familiar?

Well, there are now. Because today I am kicking off a new series of goose-pimple political tales called 'Westminster Wobbles', and the first flesh-crawling tale is called:

Little Ken at Number Ten CHAPTER ONE

John had been Prime Minister for a number of years, and quite enjoyed the job. What he had to do in this job was run the country and make sure that everyone was better off than before. Very soon he realised that this was not possible, so instead he tried to make sure that everyone was under the impression that they were better off, even if they weren't. This worked for a

while, but after a bit everyone realised that the only ones who were getting any better off were the ones who were already well off, and everyone started grumbling again. It was about this time that John realised that the country was going to grumble no matter what happened, and indeed that they quite enjoyed grumbling, so he gave up worrying and just got on with life at Number 10.

Number 10 was a big old house where all the previous prime ministers had lived, and he was sitting in front of the fire in the old sitting-room one night when suddenly his blood froze. He could hear voices! He thought he could hear a voice saying: "John! You're a jackass!" What could it be?

CHAPTER TWO

Very slowly the door opened. His blood ran even colder. Then, round the door, came his wife, Norma. "Phew, you gave me a shock, Norma," he said. "I thought you were a ghost."

She smiled and said she was out.

"Did you say something about a jackass?" he enquired.

While, he wondered if Disraeli ever insisted on reading his wife parts of his novels. He yawned and then, halfway through his yawn, he had the shock of his life! The figure of Disraeli was moving! It was coming towards him! "Who are you?" said John, fearfully.

"I am the ghost of Disraeli," said the figure.

"And I have come to warn you!"

"Warn me? Of what?"

"Do not trust Kenneth! He is after your job!"

CHAPTER THREE

"You mean Kenneth Clarke?" quavered John.

"Well, I don't mean

Kenneth Branagh!" said the ghost sweetly. "Surely there's only one Kenneth you need to fear?"

And before John's very eyes the figure of Disraeli took off its wig and make-up and revealed itself as John's next-door neighbour, Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth!

"Surely you haven't forgotten that I'm playing

Disraeli in the Tory end-of-term pantomime?" chuckled

Kenneth. "I thought I'd bring

the costume round and see

how effective it was. I have to

wall. He wondered if Disraeli ever insisted on reading his wife parts of his novels. He yawned and then, halfway through his yawn, he had the shock of his life! The figure of Disraeli was moving! It was coming towards him! "Who are you?" said John, fearfully.

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term pantomime?" chuckled

Kenneth. "I thought I'd bring

the costume round and see

how effective it was. I have to

say it worked pretty well!" "I wasn't scared at all," said John stiffly. "I was half-asleep, that's all. So you're not afraid, are you?"

"Not really," said Ken, sitting down. "That's just what Disraeli thinks."

And Ken started chittering again in a most annoying manner.

"Look, John," he said, "everyone is after someone else's job. It wouldn't be natural if they weren't. There are people after my job."

"There are people after Michael Howard's job..."

"Who wants mine?"

"Someone with the same initials as Michael Howard," whispered Ken. "He would do ANYTHING to get it from you..."

"You mean, Michael...?"

As John spoke, an explosion went off and there was the sound of breaking glass. As the two chums dropped to the floor, Ken whispered: "Gosh! I never thought he'd go that far!"

"Want to know what happens next? Buy 'Little Ken at Number Ten' in the new story 'Westminster Wobbles' series!"

Ghosts of the future rise to haunt Chirac



Andreas Whittam Smith

Jacques Chirac, the French President, is living through a bad dream, though not quite as terrifying as Mr Major's nightmares. The future for Mr Chirac holds the shameful possibility of France failing the test for entry into monetary union, the fracture of his nation's relationship with Germany, yet more national strikes and street protests and even the prospect (after the National Assembly elections in 1998) of co-habitation with a socialist prime minister. All these phantasms appear horribly real.

You could sense the tension when Mr Chirac submitted himself to a rare question-and-answer session with five journalists on French television last Thursday, just before going off to the Dublin summit. While he waited to speak, he looked grim, even angry. From the viewers' point of view, however, it made for a good programme. First there were brief film reports which portrayed France's problems. Then each journalist in turn aggressively interrogated the President on different areas of his policy.

"We are a profoundly conservative country, in which it is extremely difficult to get things done, confronted as one is by traditions and fears," Mr Chirac told his fellow citizens in the interview. "There is nothing one can undertake without immediately raising an adverse reaction." To become president and find oneself powerless to change things is a nightmare indeed.

Among Mr Chirac's ordeals is the deterioration in France's historic relationship with Germany. For 40 years, the most important objective of French foreign policy has been to run Europe with Germany — as a partnership of equals until German reunification, and since then more as France the jockey, Germany the horse. Now France is beginning to discover that, so far as economic policy within a monetary union is concerned, Germany will go her own way.

There have been increasingly frequent meetings between President Chirac and Chancellor Kohl to resolve the issue. But the origins of the disagreement lie very deep. On the German side, they go back to the country's experience of inflation in the early 1920s. The American dollar was worth 14 marks in July 1919, 493 marks in July 1922, and then hyperinflation really took hold. By January 1923 the dollar was worth 18,000 marks, by August of that year over 4 million marks and by October 1923, it was worth 25 million marks. Wages were paid by the cardload. That terrible episode remains the most important influence upon German economic policy and explains its rigid stance in the monetary union negotiations.

In order to ensure that the Euro is as hard as the Deutschmark, and thus preserve the nation's wealth, Germany has wanted to create a system in which monetary union would

operate according to rules rather than political judgement, going further along this path than even the Maastricht Treaty permits. Countries which incurred budget deficits of more than 3 per cent of national output would suffer draconian fines, which would be automatically imposed. This is carrying to an extreme the argument which has led many countries recently to allow central bank governors, rather than finance ministers, to take interest-rate decisions.

The French view, on the other hand, is essentially Gaullist. The Euro must be an instrument at the service of European business in its battle with American and Asian commercial interests. France wants a cheap, undervalued Euro in relation to the dollar and the yen. France wants to be able to say to the world what an American Secretary of the Treasury once remarked about the dollar: "The Euro: it is our money, but it is your problem." And this is of a piece with other aspects of French foreign policy, which delights in opposing the Americans in the Middle East, in Central Africa, within Nato and within the United Nations.

More seriously, Mr Chirac knows that he cannot hand over the conduct of economic policy, lock, stock and barrel, to central bankers and to technocrats, who lack all democratic legitimacy, which is what the German position ultimately implies. Mr Chirac, as a disciple of Charles de Gaulle, whose grave he regularly visits, is unable to agree to this. He has arrived at the British position by a different route.

France's response to German demands has been to weaken the criteria for judging whether states participating in monetary union are running excessive deficits, to bring in the judgement of finance ministers and to propose that the European central bank should be subject to political supervision by means of a council. At the Dublin summit, President Chirac made some progress along these lines. Euro-members running an excessive deficit will now be exempt from penalties in the event of natural disaster or unusually severe recession. Where economic growth declines moderately, European finance ministers will have a say before fines can be levied. Yet to be tackled is the notion of political oversight of the European central bank.

In the detail of negotiation, however, it is easy to forget the big, historic issues which preoccupy each participant one way rather than another. Thus far it has seemed as if only Britain were subject to forces taking her in a different direction from her neighbours. Now France and Germany find that they are being pulled apart. The Maastricht Treaty and the road to monetary union is becoming a ghastly experience for all concerned, for Mr Major, for President Chirac and for Chancellor Kohl alike. Welcome to the Common European Nightmare.

France's continuing Gaullist vision is steadily pulling it apart from Germany

Single mums and the curse of Catholicism

by Polly Toynbee

The season for celebrating birth is upon us. As Christmas card images of the Holy Unmarried Mother deck the mantelpieces, Britain remains the country with the highest number of teenage pregnancies in Europe.

Why? Because we remain deeply ambivalent about contraception — that greatest modern blessing without which women would still be household slaves. The ignorance and stupidity of so many teenagers is the direct result of our ambiguous attitudes — surrounding them with sex but denying their knowledge. The National Curriculum includes sex education half-heartedly in science lessons, with precious little useful contraceptive information, and parents are allowed to opt their children out of classes altogether.

If we were serious about teenage pregnancy there would be clinics with nurses available in every school. The Dutch have virtually no teenage pregnancies and they teach sex education from the first primary years. It does not promote more sex; their well-informed teen population embark on sex at a later age than ours.

But 35 years after the arrival of the Pill, we still have not learnt to love it as we should. The great liberator of the Sixties remains shrouded with fear, guilt and plain dislike. Much of that fear is deliberately generated by gleeeful panics promoted by the moralising press and the Christian lobbies. But some springs spontaneously from the current woolly fashion for everything labelled "natural", homeopathic and non-invasive. Teenagers brought up on Body Shop designer greenism shudder at the thought of polluting their White Musk and Dewberry bodies with nasty chemicals.

The latest Pill scare last year, started by over-parsley guidance issued by the Committee on Safety of Medicines, lead to large numbers of women giving it up. As a result, abortions rose in the first month of this year by 3,000, at a time when the abortion trend was downwards.

Myths and half-truths still surround all methods of contraception, despite all those explicit magazine problem pages. Every survey reveals astounding fear and ignorance. Women look upon contraceptive options with less than glee: all that slimy rubbery stuff, nasty looking wire contraptions



for the womb, elaborate "natural" methods with thermometers or computers and night-time urine tests — or the mighty Pill whose chemicals screw up your natural system, with God knows what long-term effects. Too many women flee to sterilisation, often the wrong drastic choice — 42 per cent in the US (one fifth later regret it).

However, contraception is easy and, for virtually everyone, problem-free if women would only believe it. The unloved IUD, for instance, is a tiny little device nowadays. As for the Pill, its very low dose, compared with the early days, is extraordinarily safe. Yet the

myths go on forever: it messes you up and might kill you through thrombosis. If you take it too young before your body is settled, it could screw up your fertility forever. It must not be taken for too long. Its effects linger on the body after stopping, delaying the chances of getting pregnant. How many of these statements do you believe? They are all untrue.

Women can take the Pill forever. You can get pregnant within 12 hours of stopping — a fact that many forgetful women learn to their cost. There is no medical reason why very young girls should not take the Pill. Of the millions who take it in Britain, only four or five die of thrombosis — a far safer record than virtually every other widely taken drug.

But we are not good at risk assessment. And who talks of the benefits? The Pill protects against ovarian cancer, of which 4,300 women die a year. Women who take the Pill have half the risk of contracting this cancer and the protective effect lasts for 15 years after they stop taking it. But how often do you hear that fact promoted?

Last week Elof Johansson, director of the Population Council, the leading US non-profit contraception research organisation, was in Britain

castigating America's continuing catastrophic teenage pregnancy rate, with 57 per cent of all US pregnancies unintended. Britain, though not as bad, he says, is closer to the US in its confused attitudes and poor figures, than to the rest of Europe. He blames the religious and moral lobbies for obstructing effective sex education. (He is one of those Swedes we tend to mock for their earnestly open approach to sex he gave reeducation parties for his daughters' coming of age.)

Whatever the social problems caused by failing to get to contraception to all who need it in the West, the population explosion in the developing world is the great problem of the next century: world population will double in the next 50 years. Johansson's research shows that wherever contraception is easily available to third world women, offered them by other women and not by doctors, women take it at once. If it is left to men, nothing happens. In most developing countries it is the men who want more babies than they can support, not the women. In Ghana, for instance, men say they want 10 babies, women want five. "When you make contraception cheaply available to all women, they take it immediately. If women chose how many children to have, 95 per cent of the world population problem would be solved," he says.

Why, then, has so little been done? "The Catholic church and the Pope," he answers bluntly. Do they really have that much influence on governments? "In the key areas of over-population, especially francophone Africa and Latin America, the Catholic church may not control the government, but it runs most of the hospitals, missions and doctors."

Fundamentalist Muslims and Protestants are also blamed, but says it is parts of the world under Catholic influence where the population danger lies. He adds wryly that we may yet come to look back on Chairman Mao as a saviour of the world for his draconian one-child policy.

What can be done? "A new Pope, a new pro-contraception Catholic policy could change the outlook for the world overnight."

Why Monet was the root of art evil

What is the point of the Royal Academy if it has to sell its Michaelangelo, asks David Lister



Crisis management after the Royal Academy's meeting last week; and the *Madonna and Child*

It was an illuminating to watch members of the Royal Academy arriving last week for the general assembly to discuss the financial crisis at the 228-year-old institution. Partly it was the way they dressed, more colourful and casual than you normally associate with people about to debate a financial crisis — which included a £3m debt, money not paid into the staff pension fund, money spent on exhibitions that never took place and, most controversial of all, whether to sell off a £50m Michelangelo to put their bank balance in the black at a stroke and for years to come.

Partly it was the fact that, unlike a group of business people or shareholders arriving at a crisis meeting, they were prepared to chat and in colourful language. "How the bloody hell was this state of affairs allowed to happen?" queried the venerable abstract artist and senior Royal Academician, 81-year-old William Gear.

Partly it was that the cream of Britain's art establishment — internationally revered artists, but often unworldly and in many cases well past retirement age — appeared nearly in all cases the wrong people to be making financial decisions about an institution costing £15m a year to run in a market that has never been more competitive in the battle to win both private sponsorship and touring exhibitions.

Then they trooped into their private meeting and it was four hours before they emerged for their official dinner. At the end of the day the RAs decided against selling off any works of art and postponed until February a decision on whether to accept a "moderniser's charter", a plan by the new secretary David Gordon and president Sir Philip Dowson to set up a "review board" that would include wealthy and worldly wise trustees, benefactors and business leaders to advise the Academy's general council on financial matters.

After night on 230 years of running their own show it is understandable that the Royal Academicians are loath

to give up absolute power without at least a two-month postponement. Their first president, Sir Joshua Reynolds, turning uneasily in his grave, is owed at least that. But accept the moderniser's charter they will. After the catalogue of financial incompetence detailed to them at their private meeting, they know they need hardened professionals to manage the money. And it is unlikely that the former ITV chief executive David Gordon, with a get-out clause in his terms of employment to leave next June if he or his employers are unhappy, would want to stay on if his modernising plans are rejected.

Things can be turned around, he believes. "Let's not make a crisis out of a drama," said David Gordon, and he is right. The Royal Academy's short-term situation isn't so dreadfully

serious. A £3m accumulated deficit is not unique for an arts institution, and certainly not irreparable for one that has multi-millionaire trustees, an exemplary Friends organisation with 70,000 members, and the money-spinning Summer Exhibition.

No, the problem for the Royal Academy — and in this respect their present cash problems may have done a service in concentrating the mind — is to re-examine the role of the institution in a rapidly changing art world. And the change has been rapid. Five years ago the present crisis would have been unthinkable as it basked in the kudos and £1.7m profit of the Monet blockbuster exhibition, with the just boast that, unlike all its major rivals, it had not a penny of government funding for its agenda-setting exhibitions from the maverick

funders.

Much fuss has been made about the possibility of the Academy selling off

its one great treasure, Michelangelo's sculpture *Madonna and Child*. But how many people, even among the Friends, let alone the general public, even knew it was there. Poorly displayed, outside the Sackler Galleries, and without direct light, its loss would probably not be greatly noticed among a public who come to see specific temporary exhibitions.

There is another area where the Royal Academy has failed to forge a new role. With its tradition and its membership, it should be the centre for education about the visual arts. Last year at a press conference by David Hockney at the Academy to publicise an exhibition of his drawings, the artist digressed to address an issue in the news at the time, that of a newscaster and her partner being reported to the police for taking pictures of their naked child. Hockney was infuriated by this crude interpretation of delight with the human form. He would be giving a lecture in the new year at the Royal Academy, he promised, on the subject. It never happened. And now have any others.

Why is there no annual Royal Academy lecture which might provide a voice for key participants in the increasingly frenetic debate in the visual arts? Where does the Academy stand on conceptualism, on Rachel Whiteread and Damien Hirst? The Academy has its own postgraduate art school and its own education set-up, and does some good work with schools on how to teach the visual arts, but there is not enough sense of it publicly leading the debate. Its excellent current exhibition "Living Bridges" (proposals for inhabited bridges across the Thames) creates an agenda in architecture. Similar exercises in the fine arts are hardly needed.

No doubt the current crisis will prompt the Royal Academy to take a careful look at its finances and perhaps its exhibitions programme. But it needs to do much more. It needs to work out what it stands for.

Her fourth birthday may well be her last, but she isn't ill



She's poor

In countries like the Gambia, one in four children die before their fifth birthday. The diseases they suffer from differ but the cause is almost always the same.

Poverty

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Field Marshal Sir James Cassels

James Cassels had seen little active service until Normandy in 1944. It was here, however, that this bold and charismatic commander of the 152nd Infantry Brigade firmly established his reputation.

A month after the invasion of Normandy, Cassels was called in to take command of 152nd Infantry Brigade in the 51st Highland Division. He was to lead his brigade with unvarying success until the end of the Second World War. During the breakout from Normandy, he was lucky to survive an attack by the RAF who had been wrongly advised on their bomb line. Among the casualties was his brigade major.

152nd Brigade were part of the liberation force that entered St Valéry-en-Caux to jubilant reception from the local inhabitants. It was also a great day for the 51st Highland Division who, pinned to the sea in 1940, had been forced to lay down their arms. The next objective was Le Havre, which was never going to be easy, for the Germans had been well dug in for four years. Success there would give a fresh harbour for supplies which previously had to come through the Normandy bridgehead. After the initial breakthrough, the German defences quickly collapsed. The next move was to clear south-west Holland up to the river Maas.

In January Cassels was sent on a well-earned leave. He arrived back at the tail end of the fierce fighting in the Reichswald Forest, part of the critical sector of the Siegfried Line which bridged the gap between the Rhine and the Maas. Allied troops had entered Germany. Cassels' 152nd Brigade crossed the Rhine on 24 March, many of his men fortified with tea laced with rum. The next 36 hours called for every last ounce of stamina that each of his three battalions could muster, for during this time little progress was made and the brigade suffered many casualties from enemy fire. Cassels was hit, yet continued controlling the often chaotic, yet vital situation for many days. The battalions put up a tremendous fight and in particular the 5th Seaforth Highlanders suffered badly. During this fighting, the division also lost General Rennie, its commander, which was a great blow. As the Germans withdrew it was



Popular: Cassels at British headquarters, Berlin, in 1962

soon obvious, as the brigade moved rapidly forward, that apart from pockets of resistance the German collapse was almost complete.

Cassels was born at Quetta, then in India, in 1907, the son of General Sir Robert Cassels. His leadership qualities were recognised early on when at Sandhurst he won the Sword of Honour. He was commissioneered into the Seaforth Highlanders in 1926. Before the war he served for 10 years in India, where he was adjutant to his battalion, and was ADC twice to his father, first for a year when Sir Robert was GOC-

in-C Northern Command and again when he was C-in-C of the Army in India.

Soon after the outbreak of war in 1939, Cassels was appointed Brigade Major of 15th Lowland Division with whom he saw a few days active service when the division was sent to France after Dunkirk. Between 1940 and 1944 he held a number of staff appointments in Britain. In 1942 he returned to his old division, the 52nd, as GSOCI, and a year later, he was given command of the 1st Tyneside Scottish (Black Watch), with whom he remained until

he was appointed Brigadier-General Staff of the 12th Corps at the beginning of 1944.

For his wartime service, Cassels was appointed CBE and awarded the DSO. Soon after the Armistice, he was promoted Acting Major-General and was given the 51st Division, which he held until disbandment in 1946. His next appointment was as Commander of the 6th Airborne Division in Palestine. Here he had the unpalatable task of maintaining law and order, which was not made any easier when the Stern Gang attacked a lightly guarded military car park and killed seven soldiers of the 5th (Scottish) Parachute Battalion.

Cassels returned to England to attend the Imperial Defence College in 1947 and in early 1948 became Director of Land-Air Warfare at the War Office. Two years later he was posted to Melbourne as Chief Liaison Officer of the United Kingdom Services Liaison Staff, Australia.

When the United Nations decided to enter the Korean War in 1951, three independent brigades from United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand were formed into a Commonwealth Division, of which Cassels was appointed GOC. The division took part in two rather limited attacks, but for the next 15 months was static. Cassels was highly regarded by the Commonwealth troops and enjoyed talking cricket to his antipodean soldiers.

On his return, he was given command of 1st Corps in the British Army of the Rhine and two years later was appointed Director of Military Training at the War Office. In 1957 he was seconded to the new Federation Government in Singapore as Director of Emergency Operations against the Communist terrorists in Malaya. He kept up a tremendous pressure on the terrorists and area by area the jungle was swept clean. By the end of 1958 there were only 250 Communist terrorists actively operating in the country, so Cassels sacked himself, recommending that his post was redundant. In July 1960 the official end of the emergency was declared.

Promoted General, Cassels returned home in 1959 to become GOC-in-C Eastern Command. He was there for six

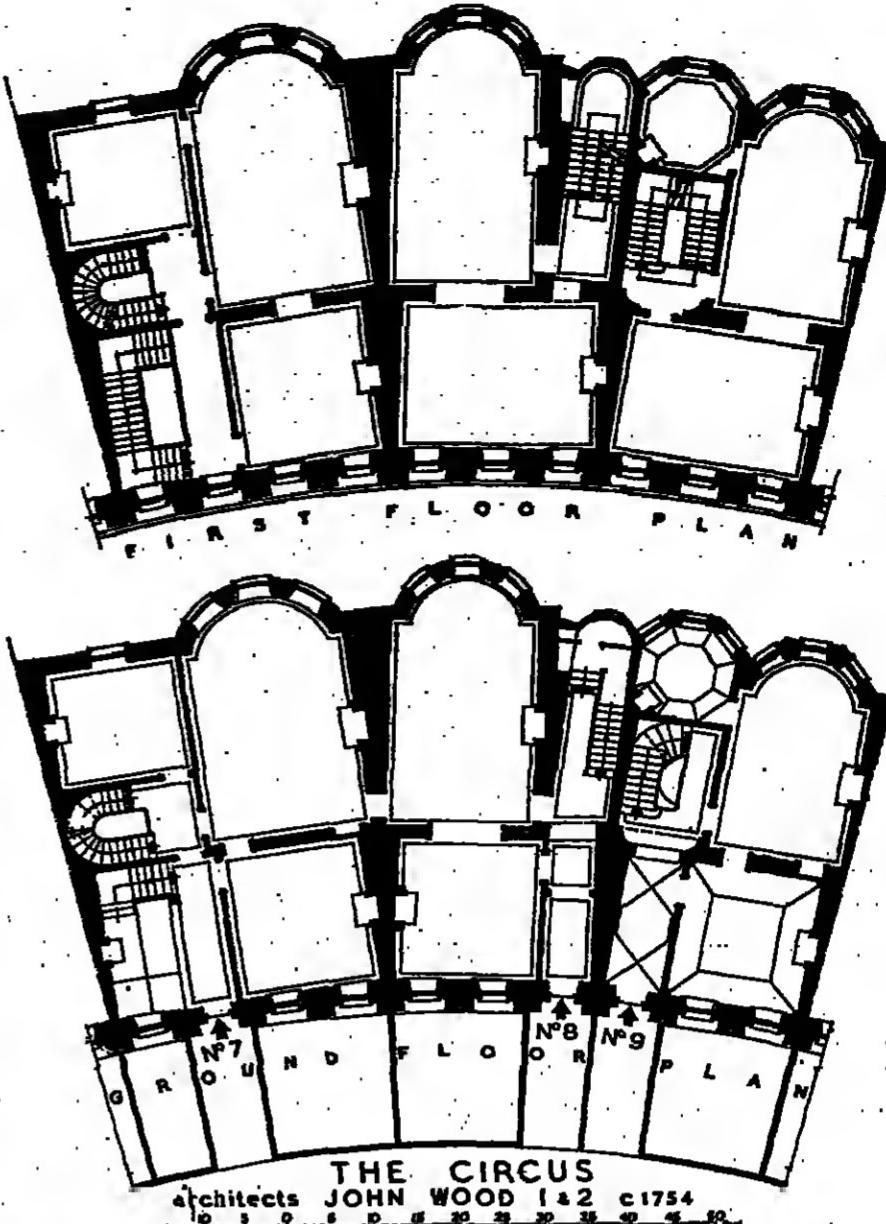
months before being appointed, in January 1960, Commander-in-Chief, British Army of the Rhine and Commander of the Nato Northern Army Group.

In this long succession of high appointments, Cassels constantly proved not only to be a fine commander, but a highly popular one, very much at ease and respected by his men. There was a warmth to him, a great charm and sense of humour. Tall, handsome, with a superb physique and fine eye, he excelled at all ball games. At Rugby and at Sandhurst he had played both cricket and rugby at the highest level and later represented the Army at cricket and golf. He was invited to join Warwickshire County Cricket Club, but declined.

He was also a superb shot and a fine and enthusiastic fisherman and from his time in India he became a first-class polo player. On his retirement in 1968 he continued with his two great pastimes, fly-fishing and shooting. He was a member of the MCC Committee, and President of the Company of Veteran Motorists from 1970 to 1973. He had an affection for jazz and a particular liking for the clarinet. Jim Cassels was himself no mean hand on the ukelele. Much delight was brought to him when his only granddaughter was born on his birthday.

Max Arthur

Archibald James Halkett Cassels, soldier; born 28 February 1907; DSO 1944; CBE 1944, KBE 1952; GOC 51st Highland Division 1945-46; GOC 6th Airborne Division, Palestine 1946-47; Director, Land-Air Warfare, War Office 1948-49; Chief Liaison Officer, UK Services Liaison Staff, Australia 1950-51; CB 1951; GCB 1961; GOC 1st British Commonwealth Division, Korea 1951-52; Commander, 1st Corps 1953-54; Director-General of Military Training, War Office 1954-57; Director of Emergency Operations, Federation of Malaya 1957-59; GOC-in-C, Eastern Command 1959-60; C-in-C, British Army of the Rhine and Commander Nato Northern Army Group 1960-63; ADC General to the Queen 1960-63; Adjutant-General to the Forces 1963-64; Field Marshal 1968; married 1935 Joyce Kirk (died 1978; one son); 1978 Mrs Joy Dickson; died Newmarket 15 December 1996.



Floor plans drawn by Leonora Ison for *The Georgian Buildings of Bath* (1946), by Walter Ison

Leonora Ison

Architectural history has produced few finer partnerships than that of Walter and Leonora Ison, the latter of whom was considered by Sir John Summerson to be one of the very best architectural draftsmen of her generation.

The Isons' great achievement was the book *The Georgian Buildings of Bath*, published in 1948. Walter Ison was the author and Leonora drew the illustrations.

The measured, reticent facades of Georgian Bath are enlivened by occasional bursts of ornament and likewise by his precise and elegant text interspersed with "decorations": sketches of doorways and gateways, of a monument or of the riverside grotto in which the playwright Sheridan is said to have wooed Miss Linley. The Isons shared and discussed their perceptions and sympathies throughout the book and *The Georgian Buildings of Bath* should be seen as a joint production.

In the 48 years since the book first appeared there has been a steady flow of publications on Bath's architectural heritage. Placed side by side, these now fill two metres of shelving in the city's branch of Waterstone's, but if one were to add together their worthwhile content it would amount to less than that of the Isons' single volume.

The thoroughness of the research into primary sources has made the book resistant to academic revisionism. Its endurance is also owed to the authors' discretion: they did not clutter the reader's view of the building with personal im-



Della's Grotto in North Parade, Bath: one of Ison's 'decorations'

pressions. We do not read of "honey-coloured stone dripping with sunlight" or "ringing cobbles", phrases which are the stock-in-trade of the writer on Bath. None the less, the book is founded on a passionate enthusiasm expressed in the introductory declaration: "Bath is, beyond any question, the loveliest of English cities."

The Isons had fallen in love with Bath and Walter Ison

L&G puts its head on block with 1997 Footsie forecast of 4,000

Forecasting is a hazardous exercise; imponderables often make the most carefully researched predictions look utterly foolish.

So when David Shaw and his team at the Legal & General insurance giant produced a head-on-the-block forecast for next year's Footsie performance it was only natural to insert cautionary qualifications.

L&G expect shares to romp ahead in the first three months and suggests that Footsie will hit a 4,400 points peak.

But from then onwards it will he downhill and the guess is that the index will then dip to 3,800, ending the year at 4,000.

With an election looming, such a forecast has to be hedged.

The direction shares will take must be highly problematic and Legal & General built four key assumptions into its forecast:

1) Labour will win the election with a working majority;

2) sterling's strength will be partially reversed; 3) world markets will fall back; and 4) institutions which have been betting against equities will pump some of their cash pile into shares.

L&G believes one of the first acts of a Labour government will be to cut ACT relief on dividends to 15 per cent which could clip 5 per cent from shares.

A tiny election victory would, of course, prompt a rapid rethink.

In the short term shares would shoot ahead with Footsie at something like 4,600 at the year-end.

L&G's view is a Conservative victory is only a 20 per cent probability against 50 per cent for Labour.

The L&G 1997 year-end Footsie forecast is at the lower end of expectations.

Some houses, including Chase, are looking for 4,400 and HSBC James Capel is on

4,350. Kleinwort Benson and UBS rest on 4,300. Nomura is banking on 3,800.

The rush by building societies and others to demutualise could have quite a significant impact on the stock market.

It is estimated that conversions will produce a £21bn windfall, making tax cuts look rather trivial.

As building society members cash in their rewards, a great deal of cash will be pumped into the economy. But as the windfall from conversions is spent over the nation's counters, many institutions will dip into their cash coffers to buy shares in the new crop of quoted financial groups.

The rush to convert from mutual organisations into public limited companies will create huge waves of market activity; such action should be rewarding for market occupiers as they bank their commissions. It could also help sentiment, providing the boost

to confidence which often goes with heightened investment interest.

L&G makes it clear that 1997 will be far more difficult

STOCK MARKET WEEK

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year

to call than this year. Besides the election there is also the re-allocation market values are looking stretched; hence the volatile reaction to US banking chief Alan Greenspan's words about overheated share prices.

But if this year was less difficult to read 12 months ago a great many alleged experts managed to get it wrong. Remember as the year started there were high expectations of a flood of takeovers, driving shares powerfully to new peaks in the first half-year with the second six months much more subdued.

In the event the flood was little more than a steady flow and if action among utilities is

stripped out the flow subsides to nothing more than a gentle trickle.

To the surprise of many the market enjoyed a golden autumn surge, taking Footsie through 4,000 points.

With talk of boom times ahead prospects should be encouraging with interim profits nearly doubling in £39m.

Asda faces a challenging time. Under Archie Norman it has made an astonishing comeback but has already enjoyed the benefits of recovery and is now deep into the hard slog of building on its revival.

NatWest Securities estimates profits will emerge at £153m, up from £138.3m. But the headline figure should look much more impressive with Asda adding in the £80m profit it made from the flotation of Allied Carpets.

Securicor has year's figures tomorrow. The security and parcels group which embraces a 40 per cent interest in Cellnet (said to be worth £26m)

should offer modest headway, say £106m against £100.8m.

The Government has so far blocked attempts to sell the mobile phone stake to the major shareholder, BT. There is a feeling the restructuring in the telephone market could lead to another Whitehall U-turn. If the Cellnet interest was sold Securicor would be vulnerable to a predator.

The brewery season drifts towards its close with Vaux, the Sunderland group, expected to roll out 255m, up from 252m. The momentum should have been provided by its Swallow Hotels chain with the up-for-sale St Andrews nursing homes unlikely to have made a significant contribution.

Gibbs Mew, the Salisbury brewer, is due to produce interim figures today. Last year it made £2.5m. But its shares are weak, humping along at a 12-month low of 299p, suggesting the profits brew could taste a little bitter.

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business & city

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BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

Boeing and McDonnell in \$45bn merger

Aerospace giant poses new threat to Airbus

David Usborne
New York

Laying down a milestone in the history of aviation, the Boeing Company and McDonnell Douglas yesterday announced plans to merge into a \$45bn single aerospace behemoth that would transform the entire industry worldwide and threaten to overwhelm all of its rivals, including Airbus in Europe.

The deal, which will undergo stringent scrutiny by monopoly regulators in the United States, would create a giant spanning the spheres of civilian jetliners, military aircraft and space exploration. It would operate under the Boeing name from its principal headquarters in Seattle.

The proposed share swap put a value of about \$13.5bn on McDonnell Douglas. Projected sales for the combined companies in 1997 would add up meanwhile to about \$47.7bn, of which roughly \$28bn would come from Boeing and \$20bn from McDonnell Douglas.

The two companies, which until now have been horselocked competitors, currently have backlog orders worth about \$100bn between them. Together they have a workforce of 200,000, most of them in the United States.

Announcing the agreement, Philip Condit, the president and chief executive of Boeing, termed it "an historic moment in aviation and aerospace". The new company, he went on,

would be the "largest, strongest, broadest, most admired aerospace corporation in the world and by far the largest US exporter".

Officials said that because of the heavy workload of both companies, the merger would not imply any large loss of jobs.

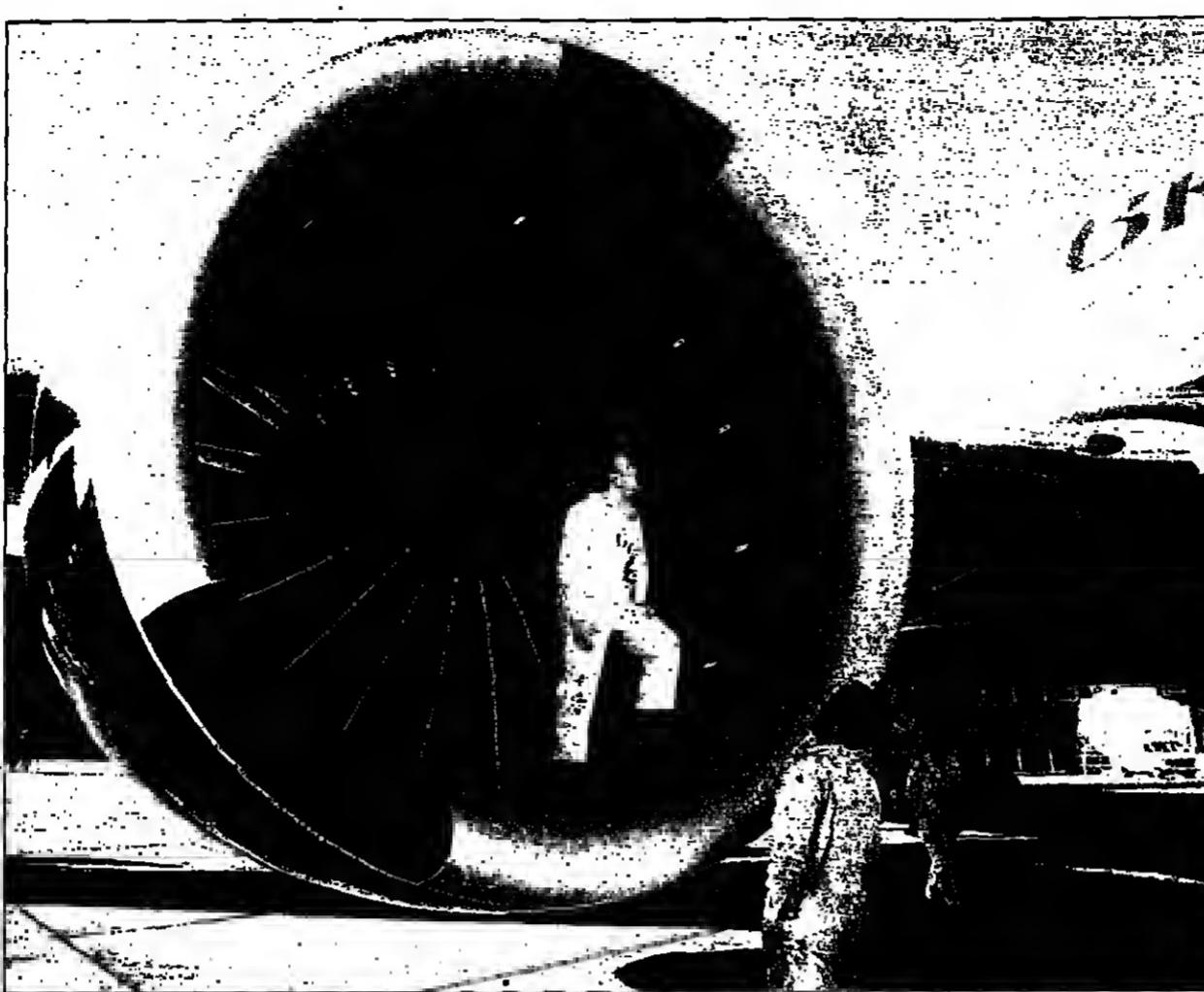
"The greatest strength of this combination is our people," Mr Condit told reporters.

The future of McDonnell Douglas, based in St Louis, Missouri, has been the subject of wide speculation for several weeks. Its commercial jetliner division, in particular, has suffered numerous setbacks and last month the company announced that it was shelving plans to develop the MD-XX, a new version of the wide-bodied MD-11.

While the company's military business has been much stronger, that also suffered a blow recently when the Pentagon limited the bidding for a new jet fighter - the Joint Strike Fighter - to Boeing and Lockheed Martin.

Only 10 days ago, McDonnell Douglas announced that it was entering into a limited agreement with Boeing to lend the company some of its workforce to help with new commercial jetliner projects. Few analysts predicted that that deal would be followed so swiftly by an agreement for an outright merger of the two companies, however.

Mr Condit said that he would serve as the chairman and chief executive of the new company. The new company, he went on,



Photographer: Glynn Griffiths

while Harry Stoecker, the chief executive at McDonnell Douglas, has agreed to become the new company's president and chief operating officer. McDonnell Douglas will remain largely at its bases in St Louis and Long Beach, California, operating as a new division of the expanded Boeing.

It is unclear how regulators in Washington will view so enormous a merger. In recent years, the US government has encouraged consolidation in the aerospace industry, giving the green light for instance to the mergers of Lockheed and Martin Marietta and between Northrop and Grumman. The Pentagon has also actively encouraged consolidation in the belief that the mergers would lead to savings.

This deal, however, may give

regulators pause. The procurement division of the Pentagon still wants to see at least a minimum of choice and competition in the aerospace field. It is equally certain that foreign governments, especially those in Europe with interests in Airbus, will make their concerns about such a merger known to the Rockwell administration.

Even before yesterday, anxiety had been building in Eu-

rope over the growing power of Boeing and the speed at which it is gathering in new commercial orders and expanding its activities. It is already the world's leading commercial aircraft supplier. Only this autumn, it paid \$3bn for the aerospace and defence businesses of the Rockwell Corporation.

McDonnell Douglas is the world's third-most important maker of commercial aircraft.

Donald Douglas started the Davis-Douglas company in the back of a Los Angeles barber's shop in 1920. The idea was to build a bi-plane for David Davis who planned to fly it in the first non-stop transcontinental flight the following year. But when the attempt failed, Mr Davis left and the firm was renamed the Douglas Company.

The launch of the twin-engined DC-3 provided the platform for early success. It dominated the airliner market until Boeing developed the 707 in the late 1950s. Douglas struggled to compete and heavy development costs caused losses in 1966. The result was a \$68m merger with McDonnell Aircraft, a supplier of fighter jets, missiles and spacecraft. Following the merger, McDonnell Douglas built the DC-10 in 1970.

Recently its commercial division has struggled against competition. The company recorded a loss last year caused by the costs of developing the MD-11.

The takeover the world was waiting for

Michael Harrison

Phil Condit, the newly elected chairman of Boeing, was in relaxed mood a week ago as he presided over the roll-out in Seattle of the company's latest 737 jet before an audience of 50,000 employees, suppliers, customers and journalists.

Even when he was asked by now familiar question - how long will it be before Boeing and McDonnell Douglas do the inevitable and merge - he maintained his composure, praising his Long Beach rival for its engineering skills, but pointedly failing to give a direct answer.

Now we know why. The following day Mr Condit presided over the most important board meeting in his 31 years with the company - the one that decided Boeing would merge with McDonnell Douglas in a week's time. Though stunning in its scale and ambition, the merger announced yesterday is not therefore unexpected, nor is it without precedent.

The rapid consolidation of the US defence industry since the end of the Cold War has already seen Lockheed and Martin Marietta merge, Northrop combine forces with Grumman and Boeing itself acquire Rockwell. It was only a matter of time before McDonnell Douglas joined the party, as a willing bride or otherwise. Indeed, Boeing and McDonnell Douglas held exploratory merger talks a year ago but they broke down after disagreements over price and the structure of the combined group.

If there was a defining moment in McDonnell Douglas's history it came a month ago when the Pentagon, to everyone's amazement, dropped it from the shortlist of companies shortlisted for the Joint Strike Fighter - a programme worth some \$150bn over the next 25 years to build 3,000 fighter aircraft for the US and UK armed forces. Perhaps the newly elected Clinton administration knew something the rest of us did not, because instead of McDonnell Douglas, it chose to give one of the two JSF development contracts to Boeing.

In any event, it would have been a mortal blow to McDonnell Douglas. Its civil aircraft business was already a pale

BOEING	
Bill Boeing built his first plane in 1916 with Navy officer Conrad Westervelt. His Seattle factory was first called Pacific	
Aero Products but changed its name to Boeing Airplane Company the following year. It was to become the world's leading commercial aircraft company which has dominated the market for the last 30 years with a share of more than 60 per cent.	
During the First World War Boeing built training planes for the US navy. When military sales declined it began the first international airmail service between Seattle and Victoria, British Columbia, using a newly designed flying boat.	
A series of innovative planes followed including the 307 Stratoliner, the first aircraft to feature a pressurised cabin. In the 1960s Boeing built the first stage of rockets used in the Apollo space programme. The end of that decade also saw Boeing's best-known jet go into production - the 747.	

Factfile: how the two giants compare	
Headquarters	Boeing, Seattle
Employees	115,000
Sales (\$bn)	\$19.5bn
Net Income (\$bn)	\$3.93bn
Market value:	\$33.8bn
Sales breakdown:	Commercial aircraft 71%, defence & space 29%
Key products	737, 747, 777, commercial jets, CH-47 Chinook, helicopter, E-3, airborne warning and control system, F-22 fighter, space station programme
McDonnell Douglas	St Louis
Employees	62,600
Sales (\$bn)	\$17.3bn
Net Income (\$bn)	\$4.16bn loss
Market value:	\$13.0bn
Sales breakdown:	Military aircraft 55%, commercial 24%, missiles & space 11%, other 10%
Key products	MD-11, MD-90, commercial jets, AH-64 Apache, MD 500 helicopters, Derta rockets, Harpoon Standoff Land Attack missiles

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Recently its commercial division has struggled against competition. The company recorded a loss last year caused by the costs of developing the MD-11.

Hollywood studios refuse BSkyB pay-per-view rights

Mathew Horsman
Media Editor

Two giant Hollywood studios, Disney and MCA, have refused to sign exclusive pay-per-view movie deals with Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB. The move will further threaten BSkyB's efforts to dominate the PPV market in Italy for 10 years but only in the UK in the age of digital television.

The main studios are eager to encourage the development of rival services for PPV films, which are sold on a so-called "transactional" basis. Unlike subscription deals, for which broadcasters pay a negotiated price for the right to show movies, PPV revenues are shared between the studio and the broadcaster.

BSkyB had hoped to offer a PPV movie service exclusively to customers who already take its two main subscription movie channels, Sky Movies and the newly

formed industry leader, are negotiating for the rights to start a PPV movie service on cable by the end of next year, using new digital set-top boxes which customers will be able to lease. They intend to offer their customers the ability to buy viewing rights to films even if they do not subscribe to the premium movie channels.

Its digital plans called for as many as 60 channels to be set aside for pay-per-view services, out of a planned total of at least 150. Customers would have to buy a new set-top box to receive the digital service, which had originally been planned for late 1997. PPV viewers would pay £2.50 per movie.

Cable operators expressed delight at the approach being followed by the studios. Several cable companies, led by Telewest and Cable & Wireless Communications, the newly

SFA faces challenge over responsibility

Jill Treanor
Banking Correspondent

The Securities and Futures Authority (SFA), the City regulator, is coming under increased pressure to drop its controversial proposal to make top banking executives responsible for calamitous failures of their financial firms after the discovery of the rules breach European law.

The proposals were born out of frustration and public outcry, at the SFA's inability to discipline Peter Baring, chairman of Barings, and his deputy, Andrew Tuckey, the two men who were running the bank when it collapsed last year.

The regulations, which have already met with stiff opposition in the City, would shift the burden of proof in disciplinary cases so that senior executives would have to prove they acted properly rather than the SFA having to show that they failed in their duties.

Article 6 establishes several safeguards that must be extended to any individual in "the determination of his civil rights and obligations or of any criminal charges against him".

It states: "Every person charged with a criminal offence shall be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law".

Apicim accepts that "the huk has to stop somewhere".

But, it said, "We believe, however, that the proposals are an over-reaction to the Barings experience."

Article 6 establishes several

protective measures to shield the banking industry from the SFA's proposal.

Confirms the committee's chairman, Sir John Cunliffe: "The

main problem is that the

proposals are too broad and

ambitious. We have to

keep the rules simple and

targeted at the right people.

Barings' collapse has raised

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science

Cholera cure? You're wearing it

The solution to one of the world's biggest killers has come from an absurdly simple source - the sari. Peter Coles reports

For developing countries, the problem with diseases is rarely that of identifying them. It's not even discovering a cure. It's finding the money to pay for that cure, and to make the changes in infrastructure that will prevent the disease maintaining an epidemic, or endemic, status.

Cholera is a case in point. In Britain, this once-feared disease is now almost unknown, banished by the separation of sewage and supply lines after its cause - polluted water - was identified in Victorian times. But that required a huge investment in our sewerage system. In countries such as Bangladesh and parts of South America, the disease remains an ever-present danger.

There, the idea of vaccination is unenormous. The present vaccine has, in any case, only a 50 to 60 per cent effectiveness in reducing clinical illness for a maximum of six months, and primarily in the first two months after vaccination. It has also been shown to be of no benefit in controlling the spread of disease.

Instead, it needs hit of lateral thinking to find a solution. Amazingly, it seems that a team of scientists, led by Rita Colwell from the University of Maryland, in the United States, and the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research in Dhaka, Bangladesh, has achieved the ultimate: a cost-free method of preventing the disease. The answer: clothing - saris, to be precise. Anyone who wears a sari, or knows someone who does, has the required technology to provide water that is virtually guaranteed not to lead to cholera, at any time.

The route to their solution requires an understanding of the microorganism and processes that leads to cholera. The bacteria that cause it - known as vibrios - are drunk along with contaminated water. Once in the gut, they release a toxin which causes severe diarrhoea and vomiting. This leads to the sufferer becoming severely dehydrated and, in many cases, it causes death.

Professor Colwell and her colleagues made a study of the biology of the bacterium. They found that the bacteria normally live in the gut of tiny plankton-like



Filter tip: tests in Bangladesh show that forcing water through sari material will dramatically reduce cholera levels

technoquest

Questions and answers provided by Science Line's Dial-a-Scientist on 0345 600444

Q How do you clone a sheep?

A First you need two sheep - sheep A and sheep B. To clone sheep A, you take an ordinary body cell from it. Then take an egg cell from sheep B's ovaries, remove its nucleus, and put it into the cell from sheep A. Let this divide and grow for a while. When there's a small group of cells, put it back into sheep B's uterus; it will grow into a clone of sheep A.

Q Which animal is most threatened by extinction?

A This is a difficult question to answer. It's thought that there are about 10 million species alive today (although it could be as many as 100 million - we just haven't found them all yet). Recent estimates say that roughly 27,000 will become extinct every year - that's 74 a day, or three an hour. Most of these are unknown to us and invisible to the naked eye, but important even so. They are all equally threatened.

Q Why are there no insects in the ocean?

A Very few insects have colonised the marine environment - possibly because there are very few flowering plants (which many insects feed on) in the oceans. But this doesn't account for the absence of carnivorous insects in the oceans. These don't rely on flowering plants, so their absence is a mystery.

Q Why do snails and slugs produce slimy mucus and how do they do it?

A Gastropod mucus has the unique property of being visco-elastic - part glue, part lubricant. The real question is, how does a one-footed animal walk on glue? By exerting different shear forces on the mucus with its foot the mollusc can change the properties of the stuff, allowing it to slide gracefully over a rough surface one moment and then stick firmly to a vertical smooth surface the next. The mucus comes from several very large glands in the foot which are filled with cells called goblet cells. The goblet cells manufacture things called glyco-proteins (sugar proteins) which are large spacious molecules that absorb lots of water. Mucus is actually about 95 per cent water - with a few calcium, magnesium and sodium ions. So the goblet cells produce these glyco-proteins which absorb water and swell. To watch a mollusc in action let it crawl over a sheet of glass and watch it from underneath. You'll see it sliding over the mucus in the centre of the foot while the edges of the foot ripple with muscles which propel it forward.

Photograph: Brian Harris

(because the decontamination would often fail) it would be the sort of experiment in folk wisdom which would quickly fall into disrepute.

Thus, although the procedure is a simple one, it has taken many years of research to produce. Because the tiny bacteria are attached to the much larger plankton; they can be filtered out - but no one realised this until the Maryland team's work.

It might seem surprising that such a simple, effective remedy has never been produced by the techniques that have produced so much other folk wisdom. Yet it is clear that an understanding of cholera's particular biology is required, along with some way of measuring the effectiveness of the filtration technique. And because it would not work during monsoon

theoretically ...

The missing link between cave drawings and modern writing may have been made with some 10,000-year-old stone carvings from Syria, the New Scientist reported.

The stones, taken from the left bank of the river Euphrates, carry ancient pictograms. Danielle Stordeur of the Institute of Oriental Prehistory near Nimes said the pictograms were an intermediate form of communication - more advanced than stone-age cave drawings but not as advanced as real writing.

The flat, oval rocks depict, among other things, an insect connected to something that looks like an owl, a snake, arrows and zigzags. Stordeur said her group would have to find more carvings to decipher the meaning. The area is due to be flooded next year when the Tigris dam is built.

A German priest has given scientists a better chance of discovering how Saturn got its rings, when an international space probe starts its seven-year voyage to the planet

next year. East German books, rescued from the scrap heap by Martin Westhoff, a Lutheran pastor, have provided the recipe for a ceramic material essential to a spectrometer for the Nasa Cassini probe.

Modern ceramics, designed to expand and contract as little as possible, would split apart when bonded to glass if the rates of expansion are not similar, whereas older materials such as magnesium silicate are much more similar.

Forget the Freemasons. A new communications system could turn the handshake from a simple greeting to a sophisticated means of transferring information.

The system under development at IBM's Almaden Research Laboratory in San Jose, California is called a Personal Area Network (PAN). It turns the human body into an extended transmitter, conducting a tiny modulating electric current so anybody wearing a PAN is able to pass data to another PAN user just by shaking hands.

The PAN could also be used in help communication between electronic devices like

mobile phones and watches or even acting as a security check, ensuring that someone is authorised to take money out of a cash dispenser. The prototype transfers data at a speed of 300 bytes per second - slow by modern technology standards. But the researchers claimed future models would reach 12,500 bytes per second.

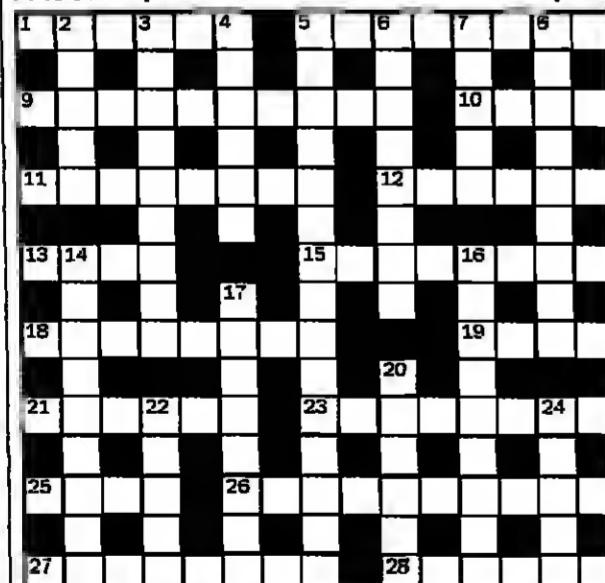
Ganymede, Jupiter's largest moon, resembles a "living" planet with active core creating a clear magnetic field, scientists reported. Measurements made by the Galileo spacecraft as it passed by Ganymede earlier this year showed it emitted radiation that could realistically only come from a liquid metal core like Earth's.

Jupiter's moons have long been seen as being more like Earth than the gas giant they orbit. Many have large amounts of water, some have gaseous atmospheres and active volcanoes. Ganymede's magnetic field is only about a tenth that of Earth but that is much more than Earth's moon has, for example, or Venus or Mars.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 317L Monday 16 December

By Portia



- CROSS**
- Silly of boss concealing Greek letter (6)
 - Crunch comes with entertainment losing money (8)
 - No, if rained, becoming excessive (10)
 - New order about royal standard (4)
 - Clerical style? (8)
 - Hears number one song (6)
 - Few escape from obscure fever (4)
 - Seen to it mixture is sweet (8)
 - Spartan quarters in a slum building (8)
 - Word coming from receiver beforehand (4)
 - Understand mass (6)
 - Foundation of cure is a naturally occurring mineral (4,4)
 - Wants easy listening (5)

- DOWN**
- Stick's a nuisance (4)
 - Ioken, routine check (10)
 - Voluntary worker gets blank cheque (4,4)
 - Rest sit down again (6)
 - Sound out Northern heavyweight (5)
 - Continue training hard after run (9)
 - Urge Rex to join club (6)
 - Guards Don sent on foolishly refuse to budge (5,4,6)
 - Finished face up, on top (8)
 - Died before Latin poet (5)
 - Apple sauce? (9)
 - Anger about one held by the German soldier (9)
 - Earwig girl's found outside a shed (9)
 - Bearing off aristocratic lady (8)
 - A Briton ends up with European river duck (6)
 - Henry's keenness gains a boundary (5)
 - Wants easy listening (5)

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